

Dramatic Stories of Jesus



by Louis Albert Banks

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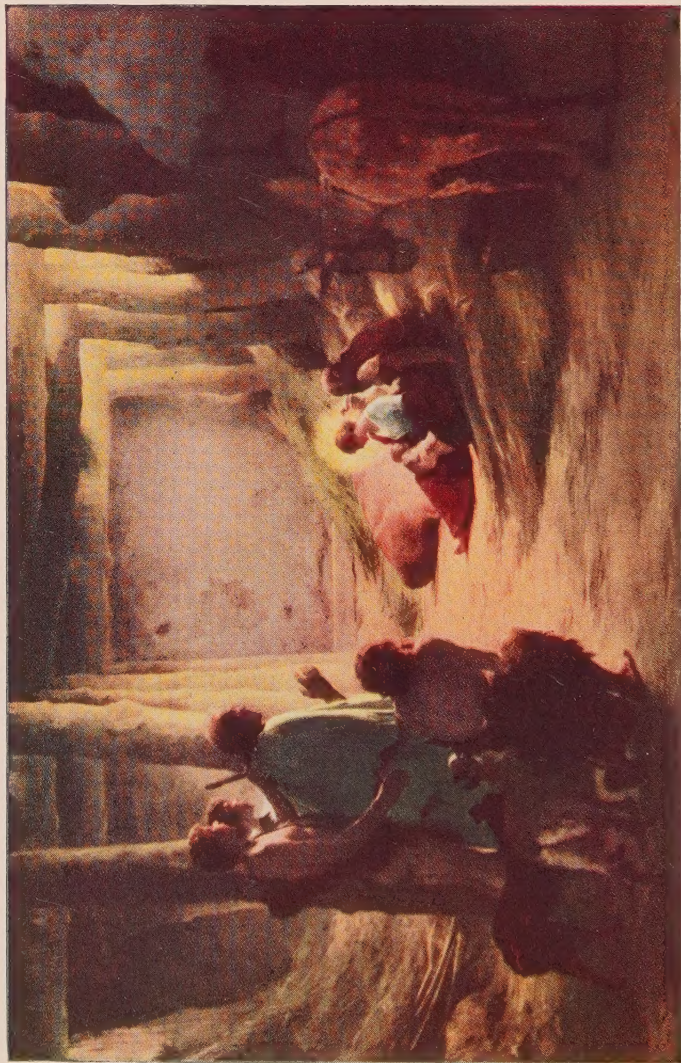
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**Dramatic Stories
of Jesus**



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Lerolle, 1848—

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. *Luke II, 15-16.*

Dramatic Stories of Jesus

Filling Silent Places in the Gospels

By

REV. LOUIS ALBERT BANKS, D. D.

Author of

"Christ and His Friends," "Paul and His Friends,"
"Hero Tales from Sacred Story," "Sermon Stories
for Boys and Girls," "The Winds of God," etc.

ILLUSTRATED



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To
My Wife
Florence Aiken Banks
To Whose Persistent Suggestion and Encouragement
These Stories Owe Their Existence

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

While I have given the imagination a free rein in all the stories contained in this volume, I have endeavored to keep within the range of possibility.

—Louis Albert Banks.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I—THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH AS TOLD BY ONE OF THE SHEPHERDS	13
II—HOW DOCTOR LUKE LEARNED THE STORY OF THE ANGELS' SONG	31
III—NICODEMUS TELLS HIS OWN STORY OF HIS ACQUAINTANCE WITH JESUS . . .	45
IV—JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST	71
V—CHRIST'S FIRST SERMON	97
VI—THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND AND THE NIGHT AFTER	109
VII—THE DEVILS LOOSE AT GADARA (Specially reported for The Jerusalem Herald) .	119
VIII—THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE MORN- ING AFTER	135
IX—MARTHA'S STORY OF THE RAISING OF LAZARUS	145
X—SIMON'S STORY OF THE TWO DINNERS HE GAVE TO JESUS	159
XI—CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM . . .	177
XII—THE REPARTEE OF JESUS	185
XIII—THE WOMAN WHOM JESUS REFUSED TO CONDEMN	193
XIV—PETER'S STORY OF THE LAST NIGHT . .	203

CONTENTS—(*Continued*)

	PAGE
XV—THE BOY WHO LOST HIS SHEET	219
XVI—HOW SIMON OF CYRENE CAME TO BEAR THE CROSS	233
XVII—WATCHING WITH THE ROMAN GUARD . .	247
XVIII—MARY MAGDALENE'S OWN STORY . . .	263
XIX—CHRIST'S EASTER APPEARANCE TO PETER	279
XX—SIMON THE ZEALOT TELLS THE STORY OF JUDAS	287
XXI—HOW DOCTOR LUKE FOUND HIS STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON	301

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS— <i>Lerolle</i> . <i>Frontispiece</i>	
APPARITION TO THE SHEPHERDS— <i>Plockhorst</i> . . .	36
CHRIST TALKING WITH THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE— <i>Hofmann</i>	48
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST— <i>Andrea del Sarto</i>	72
THE SON OF A CARPENTER	100
FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND— <i>Murillo</i>	112
MIRACLE OF THE GADARENE SWINE— <i>Rivière</i> . .	120
THE TRANSFIGURATION— <i>Raphael</i>	136
THE RAISING OF LAZARUS— <i>Rubens</i>	152
MARY ANOINTING THE FEET OF JESUS— <i>Hofmann</i>	164
ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM— <i>Doré</i>	176
TRIBUTE TO CÆSAR— <i>Titian</i>	188
CHRIST AND THE ADULTRESS— <i>Hofmann</i>	196
DENIAL OF ST. PETER— <i>Harrach</i>	216
JESUS AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES— <i>Jalabert</i> . . .	224
CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS— <i>Raphael</i>	240
CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN— <i>Plockhorst</i> .	248
WOMAN! WHY WEEPEST THOU?— <i>Schmid</i>	272
CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE— <i>Hofmann</i>	284
THE REMORSE OF JUDAS— <i>Armitage</i>	296
THE PRODIGAL SON— <i>Dubufe</i>	308

The Story
of Jesus'
Birth as Told
by One of
the Shepherds

I

The Story of Jesus' Birth as Told by One of the Shepherds



THE khan of Chimham was full to overflowing in the little town of Bethlehem. It was tax time, and the people were flocking in from all the surrounding country.

He who now kept the hotel or khan or inn was not the Chimham who gave it its name. As far back as the days of Jeremiah, the prophet referred to this hotel as "the lodging place of Chimham" at Bethlehem, and through all that time there had doubtless always been a Chimham, a descendant of the original stock, as the landlord of the inn at Bethlehem.

Many of the old settlers, who had spent their lives in Bethlehem, had by now forgotten the interesting story of the way the Chimhams came to be innkeepers in the old town of David, on the surrounding hills of which the great shepherd—poet—king had spent his happy boyhood looking after his father's

flocks, and at whose great spring by the gate he had loved to slake his boyish thirst.

The name of Chimham carries us back to the time when that brilliant but wickedly ambitious young prince, Absalom, rebelled against his father, and David had to flee across the Jordan for his life.

When David was hard-pressed for food for himself and the loyal band of friends who had accompanied him into his exile, a fine old man, a rich rancher, a Gileadite by the name of Barzillai, was very kind to him and "brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David and for the people that were with him." Indeed, if David had been his own brother, Barzillai could not have been more kind or more generous and gracious to him. The old proverb, "A friend in need is a friend indeed," never had a more apt illustration, and the big generous heart of David was melted into lasting friendship by the kindness of this fine old farmer.

Then, when David was returning from his exile, his new found friend, Barzillai, went

over Jordan with him and David begged him to go with him to Jerusalem and live with him in his palace for the rest of his life, but Barzillai excused himself with great good sense. He said in substance, "I am already over eighty years old, my eyesight is no longer good, my hearing is heavy, and a deaf, half-blind, old man would be only a burden to my lord, the king. But I have a son, Chimham, who has a great ambition to see new sights and enjoy the life of the city, and if my lord will look after him, I shall be grateful." So David in his gratitude kissed Barzillai good-bye and took Chimham with him.

Now if Chimham had had the right quality in him, David would no doubt have made him a great general or given him a place of power in the government; but he was of only ordinary material, so after awhile, when the young fellow tired of the city, David gave him the khan at Bethlehem, and he spent his life there, and no doubt it was a descendant of his who was landlord there when Joseph and Mary came to be taxed in David's town the night before Christmas so long ago.

And now Joseph, the descendant of David, and his wife, Mary, were approaching this inn

of Chimham when twilight had already faded into dark, Mary riding on a donkey and Joseph walking and leading it. They knew that the time was near when her child was to be born, and so were greatly desirous of a comfortable lodging which they hoped to find in the khan of Chimham, for they well knew its good name. But with Mary already feeling ill, it was a great disappointment to them to be met by the landlady with the assurance that the house was already filled and she could not let them in. Then Joseph pleaded with her that Mary was ill and must have shelter. At this she said, "You can get shelter, at least, in the cow stable. There you will be out of the wind and the chill night air and there is a vacant stall where you can spread some hay for a bed."

As that was the best he could do, Joseph hurried with Mary to the stable, where with such care as haste would permit he shook down a bed of hay, laid the sheepskin from the back of the donkey over it, and tenderly placed the suffering Mary upon it, covering her with his own great sheepskin mantle and watching by her side. There was no doctor to minister to her, no trained nurse to assist her. And there

Mary had her induction into the pains and mysteries of motherhood. In the stable, alongside of Chimham's khan, with the cows chewing their cud on either hand and the patient donkey munching his food near the door, Mary went down into the valley and shadow of death and brought back with her the child who was to be the Lord of life and glory.

While these wonderful things were happening in Bethlehem, things equally as unusual and marvelous were occurring out among the Bethlehem hills where the shepherds were watching their flocks.

At this season of the year they kept them constantly out on the range, and, tho each shepherd had his own flock to tend, they lived in light tents and at night brought their herds close together for protection, for not only had they to watch against wolves and occasional marauding lions and bears, as David many years earlier had learned, but at this time of taxing when many travelers were on the road they must guard against bands of bandits and robbers who lurked in the hiding places of the hills and made occasional raids on their flocks for food.

It was a beautiful night. The clear Syrian

sky was sprinkled with innumerable stars, and about the campfire in the early evening the shepherds were gathered for rest and friendly conversation.

The fire was cheerful, the men were mostly middle-aged, but two were noticeable exceptions. One was a patriarchal looking man with white hair and a long snowy beard. This was Nador, a man held in high respect by all the other shepherds. Nador had been educated for a rabbi, and it had been a grievous disappointment to him when, on account of broken health, he was compelled to give up his career and live the life of a shepherd, remaining as much of the time as possible in the open air in order to prolong his life.

The other was a bright-faced, eager youth named Docus, who lay near him; even when lying at rest he seemed ready to spring at any moment into action as a living, vital, human interrogation point. He, too, was very popular, not only on account of his virile youth, but because of the atmosphere of eager zest of life that seemed to radiate from him. Docus and Nador were reclining near each other, as usual, for they were great friends and the bond of fellowship between them was strong.

Several big sheep dogs drowsed before the fire—fine, big, shaggy fellows with the keen, smart-looking faces that remind one of what Job says in one of his shrewd characterizations of some of the men of his day, “I disdained to set them with the dogs of my flock.”

When the company had been silent awhile, Docus, who never broke in when the older shepherds were speaking, started up suddenly, turning his eager face toward his friend Nasor and, speaking loud enough so that all could hear, said, “Cauda (giving the name of one of the older shepherds who was now sleeping in order that he might take his turn at watching later in the night) told me a strange story to-day.”

“What was it?” asked Nasor.

“Why it was about a relative of his named Zacharias, who is a priest. He is an aged man and his wife also is old, and about a year ago an angel appeared to him, Cauda says, and told him that his wife, who has always been barren, would conceive in her old age and bear a son. And Cauda says that Zacharias was so astonished that he asked the angel, who said his name was Gabriel, to give him a sign, and the angel said that the sign would be that he,

Zacharias, would not be able to speak again until the child was born, and that the child would be the forerunner of the Messiah whom the prophets have foretold for so long."

As the boy paused, Nator inquired, with evident interest, "Well, Docus, what did Cauda say came of it?"

"Why, he says that sure enough Zacharias never spoke a word after that for nine months. They could communicate with him only by signs and by writing all that time, and Elizabeth, his wife, had a son born to her three months ago, and it was the talk of every one on account of her age, and he says that when the baby was born they were trying to decide on a name and they wrote on a tablet asking Zacharias what they should call him, and he wrote, 'His name is John,' and as soon as he had written that, Cauda says, he began to talk; and ever since has been able to talk as well as ever."

"That is a very strange story," said Nator, solemnly, "and it may mean a good deal more than we know. I have long believed that the Messiah would soon come, and I have hoped and prayed that I might live to see Him. And do you know, my dear Docus, that there is a

prophecy that the Messiah, who shall be the Governor and shepherd of Israel, shall come out of Bethlehem."

"No," said Docus, "I did not know that." Then, his eager face lighting up, "He might come any time. It might be this very night!"

The group of older men looked at Docus with amusement written in their faces, but Nasor said soberly, "Yes, it might be to-night."

And then just as he spoke, a wonderful thing happened—a glorious radiance filled the skies, so bright that the stars were hidden, and a splendid angel clothed in white seemed poised in the air above them, and as they wondered and were filled with fear at the marvelous sight, he spoke to them: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for there is born to you this day, in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

And when the angel had said that, down through the light other angels came as if they had dropped through the floor

of heaven. Just as one rarely sees in early springtime a flight of robins, confused by a dense, thick snowstorm, come tumbling out of the snow overhead as if they had tumbled out of the skies—hundreds of bright robin redbreasts just thrown out of the bosom of the white storm—so the angels seemed to Docus and the other shepherds; they seemed to come fresh out of heaven itself and to have brought much of heaven's light and glory with them, and they came singing. The shepherds heard the singing even before they could see the angels; and when they saw them, they could not at first catch the words, but as the voices drew nearer and the number of shining forms increased until hundreds and thousands of angels filled the radiant and glorious heavens, they began to understand the words as again and again the hosts of the heavenly choir sang the glorious anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

Oh, such music! It seemed to Docus and, indeed, to all the shepherds, that they had never heard music before. The deep swelling bass, the pure soaring tenor, the sweet waves of soprano, the haunting melody of the alto!

Their hearts were at once melted to tenderness and exalted to the skies on the great waves of heavenly music.

And then, even while they listened, awed and inspired, the angelic host gradually lifted into the heavens from whence they came, and the stars came out again in the great vault of blue, and they were alone.

For a moment they were silent, looking into each other's faces with amazement. Then Docus, who could restrain himself no longer, turned his blazing eyes that glowed like stars in his flushed face toward Nasor and said, "Come, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

This found eager response in every heart. It was about time for the changing of the watch, and quickly arousing the shepherds who had been sleeping, the whole group that had seen the vision and listened to the wonderful message and had heard the marvelous music of the heavenly choir drew their sheepskin mantles about them and with their long shepherd staves in their hands walked rapidly toward Bethlehem.

Naturally, the impetuous Docus led the way

and Nasor, despite his many years, came next. But there were no stragglers, for all were aroused as never before with a strange, holy excitement and expectation.

As they went on, their excitement increased, and ere long Docus was fairly running, and so, "with great haste" they came to the town. As Docus turned toward the khan, Nasor spoke for the first time, "Docus, did you notice that the angel said we would find the holy babe in a manger? That means the stable; perhaps they are strangers here and the khan was crowded."

"Yes," answered Docus, "I did notice that, and we will go there. And then they came in sight of a dim light at the door of the stable, which had been dug in the side of the hill. Docus slowed down a little, timidly, as he came through the open door of the stable, and the others drew up closer behind him; and so it was a rather startling group that Mary and Joseph saw, this group of strangers, with their big, shaggy, sheepskin mantles and their huge shepherd staves.

Mary was frightened at first, but as Docus pressed his way closer and she saw the innocent, eager look in his tanned young face and

behind him the benevolent, worshipful face of Nator with his crown of white hair and his long white beard, her fear vanished, and as the shepherds fell on their knees before the manger and with one accord began with excited sobbing voices to cry aloud, "Oh, thou blessed Messiah, Thou God-given Saviour, we worship Thee, we give Thee our praise, and we glorify Thy name!" she knew then that this was only another of the love mysteries of God in connection with her precious Son which she had been chosen of Heaven to bear.

When the shepherds had risen again to their feet, Mary motioned to Docus to come near, and he knelt close to her head and bent over so she could speak to him without great effort in her weakness; and very softly she said, "Please tell me all about it, dear boy. Tell me why you came and why you worshiped my little Son."

Very gently, and in low and soft and eager tones, his face glowing with a holy exaltation, Docus told Mary about their conversation out at the sheep camp and how, while they were talking of the prophecies of the Messiah, the first angel had come and told them of the birth of Jesus and how they would find Him in the

manger, and then of the great company of angels and their sweet songs and their glorious message of mercy and good-will.

Mary's face was also full of exaltation and wonder, and when he had concluded she drew aside the covering and let the young shepherd look with reverent and adoring eyes on the innocent face of the infant Christ lying in the manger.

And then as the morning broke, and the first rays of sunshine came through the open door of the stable, they took their leave, and the shepherds went out of the little town, back over the hills to their flocks, with glad, happy faces, praising and glorifying God for what they had seen and heard.

But soon after, Jesus was taken away into Egypt for fear of Herod, and Docus lost track of Him for thirty years. He never forgot that wonderful night, tho, and the vision of the Christ child, and the conversation with Mary; and every year he made a visit to Bethlehem, going for a few moments of prayer to the little stable where the Divine Child had lain.

And when he heard of the preaching of Jesus, he went to hear Him, and was speedily

convinced that here was the Messiah, the Savior, of whom the angels had sung to him and his friends so long ago on the Judean hills and whom they had worshiped as a babe in Bethlehem.

He became an earnest follower of Jesus, and was one of those who gathered with the hundred and twenty in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. It was the wonderful testimony of Docus that won many shepherd people in the multitude to whom Peter preached to believe on the Christ. And afterward, when he decided to give the remainder of his life to proclaiming the Gospel of the risen and ascended Lord, he went back to Bethlehem for the last time to kneel in that holy place where he had first looked on the face of Jesus and talked with the Virgin Mother. And as he arose from his knees and turned to the stable door, an old woman stood there, leaning on her cane and regarding him with a piteous gaze. After a moment she spoke: "Oh, kind sir, if you have knelt there, as, I believe, because of Him who had His birth there more than thirty and three years ago, pray also, I beg of you, for the unhappy woman who refused to make room for His mother and her Holy Babe

in this khan. Had I but known, or could I have been wise enough to have given that sweet mother my own bed and that Divine Child, the Savior of men, had been born in my room and on my bed, how much sweeter would have been my rest through all these years!"

And so it was Docus to whom was granted the precious privilege of bringing the comfort of Christ's forgiving love to the unhappy woman who had suffered so many years for closing her door to the mother of Jesus. And in the old khan of Chimham the peace of Him who is Prince of Peace reigned again that night.

How Doctor
Luke Learned
the Story
of the
Angels' Song

II

How Doctor Luke Learned the Story of the Angels' Song



ERE I to be asked who, after Paul, was the most efficient of all the men of early Christianity in spreading the Gospel of Christ throughout the world through all time, I would reply, without hesitation, "Doctor Luke." And yet he is mentioned only three times in the New Testament, outside of the introduction of the two books that he wrote, The Gospel according to St. Luke, and, The Acts of the Apostles. But every Christian on earth or in heaven owes more than he can tell to the able, diligent and consecrated writer of those two books.

Luke was a Gentile, a scholarly youth from Antioch. His whole life was full of adventure. He was born a slave to Theophilus, the man to whom he dedicated his books, his literary patron. He was so bright and magnetic a youth, so full of charm and loveliness, that

his master made him to all intent and purpose his son, sent him to college, and gave him the very best education possible in his time. Not only did Luke have a thorough general education, but he received as well the best medical education to be had in the world in those days.

It is highly probable that Luke and Paul were in college together and were knitted together with the first and most lasting freemasonry known to mankind—the brotherhood of college mates.

With the possible exception of Paul, Luke was by far the most scholarly man in all that early group who gave their lives to the spread of Christianity on the earth. He had beyond all question a rarely delightful and gifted personality. He was an artist, a musician, and a poet, in addition to having his wonderful gift of language and his acquirements as a physician.

He wrote the Greek language—the language of science and music and art to as great a degree in his day as French was a generation ago—with fully as perfect a facility and polish as any writer of his age. So able a critic as Renan declares that the Gospel according to Luke is “the most beautiful book ever

written." It is the work of a rarely beautiful soul. During all of his more than eighty romantic and adventurous years, almost all the people, if not every one, who came in personal contact with Luke loved him.

After he became a Christian Luke gave himself up with singular devotion to Christ, to be the helper of those who, like Paul, were the leaders in carrying the story of Christ to the ends of the earth. He was Paul's trusted companion, physician, and helper throughout the greatest years of his ministry.

In the letter to Philemon, Paul calls him his "fellow worker." In his second letter to his great friend, Timothy, Paul says, "Only Luke is with me." This letter was written down in the old prison under Nero's dungeon in Rome, and shows that when nearly all his friends had deserted him, this quiet, self-effacing, scholarly Luke was always faithful. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul speaks of Luke with the tenderest affection as "Luke, the beloved physician."

Luke was with Paul in all three of these characters—companion, physician, and fellow-worker—in many of the greatest experiences of Paul's adventurous and glorious career.

Luke was with him when the man of Macedonia appeared to him, and went forth with him on his great mission to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles. Luke was with him in his last journey to Rome, and was his comrade in the great shipwreck en route. It is Luke who paints that graphic picture of the storm at sea, and of Paul's courage and good cheer through it all—one of the most fascinating stories of a shipwreck ever written in any language.

Luke went on with Paul to Rome, ministered to him through all the years of imprisonment, and remained until martyrdom sealed the ministry of his noble friend.

* * * * *

Now it had long been a matter of great interest to know how Doctor Luke obtained the wonderful stories connected with the birth of John the Baptist and with the infancy of Jesus, and especially with the visit and song of the angels to the shepherds and their worship of the Christ child the first Christmas morning in the manger at Bethlehem, as well as the many tender and intimate remarks or statements about Mary's private thoughts and feel-



Plockhorst. 1825-1907

APPARITION TO THE SHEPHERDS

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. *Luke II, 8, 9.*

ings at that time, which Luke alone of all the writers of the New Testament records.

After long reflection and meditation on the life of Luke and on these beautiful and tender stories related at the opening of his Gospel, I sat one evening musing on it all, when I fell into a meditation so deep and absorbing that all surrounding circumstances seemed to pass away and I was living with Doctor Luke in Ephesus. All of the things I shall record seemed to happen before my own eyes, tho I was not a factor in any of them. Luke was in Ephesus to watch over Paul, and saw him every day, advising as to his health and ministering to him in every way he could; but he was practising his profession to earn his living, tho much of his work was done freely to help the very poor and wretched, among whom he was as an angel of mercy.

One day he was called to see an elderly lady, and, as usual, in some unexplained way, I seemed to be hovering in the background, unseen, but consciously observing all that was going on.

It was a comparatively humble home to which we went, but one of neatness and comfort. The patient to whom Doctor Luke was

introduced was a woman with a personality one could never forget. She was kindness and gentleness incarnate, but she possessed a certain dignity and sense of worth which one could not but feel at once.

In her face one saw great peace and restfulness, but one felt it was a peace born of storm, that the woman had lived intensely, had suffered much, but had conquered. It was the peace of conquest. While Doctor Luke was ministering to her and seeking to relieve the pain from which she was suffering, I could see that he was greatly interested and gave every evidence of excitement. And when at last he had succeeded in bringing her comfort, he could no longer restrain himself, and exclaimed, "Dear Madam, forgive me if I seem inquisitive, but are you not Mary, the mother of Jesus?"

She was startled and looked long and earnestly into his keen but frank and honest eyes. Evidently seeing there the complete honesty of his soul, she quietly answered: "Yes, I received from our heavenly Father that great and wonderful honor of being the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah."

There was nothing of the ordinary pride of

motherhood in her face or tones as she spoke these gentle and solemn words, but a look of indescribable tenderness mingled with reverent wonder, as if the holy mystery of the birth of Jesus was yet as mysterious and marvelous to her as in those early days when the angel came to her in Nazareth with the startling and marvelous message from heaven.

Quiet and self-contained as Luke was, it was evident that it took all his power to restrain his emotions.

"Will you tell me how you came to be here in Ephesus?" he asked at last.

"Oh, yes," answered Mary, "I am with the beloved John who came here to minister to the churches. On that awful last day, you may have heard, Jesus gave me into John's care as his own mother, and asked me with a look of tenderness I can never forget to look upon John as my son. So when John came to Ephesus I came with him to keep his home and will remain here no doubt for the rest of my life on earth. John is away now a great deal. He has long been absent this time, and I know not whether I shall see him again."

After a few moments of reverent reflection Luke lifted his eyes to Mary's face finally and

voiced his thought: "There are so many false and misleading rumors abroad about the birth of Jesus," he said, "and as time passes there will undoubtedly be still more, that I am constrained to seek out myself the eye-witnesses of all the events connected with the life on earth of our divine Master and record their accounts for all time. Many things connected with the birth of Jesus you alone know. Will you not, I pray, for the sake of Him whom you brought into the world, tell me those things?"

Again I watched Mary as she looked long and searchingly into those sincere eyes as if she would pierce into the very secrets of the man's soul, and again, evidently satisfied with the holiness, the honesty, and the devoutness of the doctor's purposes, she lay back with a sigh and said: "Yes, I will do as you request, for His sake, and to further the purpose of God."

While it was evident that Doctor Luke was overjoyed at meeting the mother of Jesus, not only in the pleasure of meeting her, but also that he was to learn her story from her own lips, he restrained himself as usual with great self-control, while Mary in her soft, gentle

tones spoke of her girlhood and of that wonderful day when the angel came to her in Nazareth and told her she was to be the mother of the Savior. She told of her own fears, her wonderment, and of her final submission to the will of God. She spoke of her sorrow at the suspicions of Joseph, of her relief and comfort when God had convinced him of her honor; and of his willingness to submit to the divine purpose. She described her visit to her kinswoman, Elizabeth, and told all the amazing stories of the revelation to Zacharias and the birth of John the Baptist which Elizabeth confided to her.

Then she told of the trip to Bethlehem, of her sudden illness, the crowded inn, and of the refuge in the stable with the cattle, her bed on the hay in the stall, and how later with her own unaccustomed hands she had wrapped her first-born son in swaddling clothes and Joseph had laid Him in the manger at her side.

And that his account might be just as Mary described them, Doctor Luke was carefully taking notes of all these details.

Then she told of the shepherds who came in the early dawn, and how they knelt down before the manger where the Child lay, and

begged to see Him; and of how she had turned back the sheepskin mantle that covered Him; and how, when they saw the Babe, they bowed their faces to the ground and worshiped Him. "And when they arose," said Mary, "I was so excited with wonder at it all that I asked one eager-faced youth, scarcely more than a boy, to come to me, and he knelt down close and held his head down close to mine where I could talk with him easily, and I begged him to tell me why they had come and why they had worshiped my Babe, and he told me the most wonderful story of how, as they were watching their flock during the night and talking together about the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, a wonderful light had appeared in the heavens and a great and radiant angel had descended the path of light and stood over them, and had assured them that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and they would find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, and that following this a great multitude of angels had come out of the sky singing marvelous songs about the birth of Jesus, and I was so interested that I had him tell it over to me very carefully until I had it all clear in my mind,

and as soon as I could I wrote it down carefully and I have treasured it ever since."

Turning her head as she lay on the couch she said: "Doctor Luke, will you please hand me that little box there on the shelf?" And Luke hastened to do her bidding, lifting the box in both hands, tho it was not heavy, and as he handed it to Mary, he said in admiration: "What a beautiful box! What a beautiful piece of workmanship!"

"Yes," said Mary tenderly, and her eyes softened with tears, "all the work of Jesus was like that."

At that, Luke's hands trembled, but he grasped the box with a firmer hold. "Did Jesus do this work?" he asked in tremulous tones, showing his emotion.

"Yes," replied Mary. I noticed that now it was not the Lord, not the resurrected Savior, she was thinking of, it was the mother in her, thinking of her boy. "Jesus made that for me. It was the first work He did in our little carpenter shop after we came home from Jerusalem when we had found Him in the Temple disputing with the doctors of the law. The very next day He saw that I needed some better place to put away my little keepsakes

and treasures and He said: 'Mother, dear, I will make you a box in which to keep things of that kind safely.' And I shall never forget how He worked over it late into the night, and the next morning He brought it to me and kissed me as I was busy about my work, and put it in my hands."

Then Mary opened it and took out a manuscript and said, "This copy of what the young shepherd told me that morning in the stable at Bethlehem has been in this box ever since."

Doctor Luke sat there beside the couch, where Mary lay watching him, and he very carefully copied out Mary's memorandum practically as it appears in the second chapter of his Gospel.

And that is how Luke found his story of the song of the angels to the shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem, and why he is the only one among the writers of the Gospels who has it; and it is also the reason why Luke has put so much human tenderness and so many intimate touches into the story of Mary and her Divine Son. He absorbed them that morning in John's house in Ephesus as he gazed into the face of the mother of Jesus.

Nicodemus
Tells His
Own Story
of His
Acquaintance
With Jesus

III

Nicodemus Tells His Own Story of His Acquaintance With Jesus

I



NE bright morning long ago in the Temple in Jerusalem (it is Nicodemus who is talking) I first saw Him who was to transform my life and change the course of human history. I had come from my home early that morning to pursue an interesting conversation in which I had taken part the day before with Hillel, whom I regarded as the master mind of that day in questions of sacred philosophy. When I came into Solomon's porch I saw, walking up and down the beautiful corridor, a boy perhaps twelve years of age. His bright face and eager, questioning eyes caught my attention at once. I could see that He had not been in the Temple often enough for its beauty and splendor to pall on Him. He was evidently absorbing every detail and studying it with

boyish enthusiasm. The architecture, the different kinds of wood used, and the way these woods were fitted into each other, seemed to be especially attractive to Him. He was a fascinating boy and my interest in Him became so great that I drew near and entered into conversation with Him. In answer to my inquiries He told me with the most engaging frankness that He was the son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth and that He helped His father, Joseph, in the carpenter shop at home. On that account He was much interested in the construction of the Temple, which was much the finest building He had ever seen. He was such a lovable boy, with such serious-minded earnestness about everything, that my heart went out to Him as it had never gone out to any youth before. His clothing was humble, but neat and clean, and suggested a mother's tender care. I continued to watch and converse with the happy boy while the men gathered about the wise Hillel. Among those present was Joseph of Arimathea, an open-minded, sincere man who was destined to become my bosom friend and companion in many earnest and memorable experiences. When at last the morning's discussions began, the boy drew



Illustration No. 1100

CHRIST TALKING WITH THE DOCTORS IN THE TEMPLE

And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both teaching them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. *Luke II, 46, 47.*

near my side, and as He listened to our discussions concerning the prophecies of the Messiah, His eager eyes fairly glowed with interest until at last He cried:

“Rabbi, if when the Messiah came the great masses of the people were ignorant and blind and could not see that He was really the Messiah, and should turn from Him like lost sheep, would not the Messiah save them anyway, just because they needed Him so terribly?”

Hillel was a great-hearted man, and he looked at the beautiful boy, whose eager face glowed with the emotion that had prompted his question, and he hesitated before he answered.

But before his answer was framed, a man and woman, the woman much the younger, very beautiful and with a face strangely like the boy's, came up to the edge of the circle; and the young woman, with a look radiant with excited joy, burst through the group about the boy and, throwing her arms about Him, kissed His forehead and exclaimed: “My boy, my dear boy, why have you given us so much anxiety? Why have you made your father and me seek you so sorrowfully?” But

the boy put His arms about His mother's shoulders, for He was tall and she was slight, and, with a look at once serious and loving, said: "Why, mother dear, why did you seek me everywhere sorrowing? Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house, inquiring about my Father's business?" And bowing to Hillel, and turning on me a smile of farewell, He said, "I will go home with you now, mother," and the three went away together.

As they passed out of the corridor a strange silence fell on the group, and Hillel said: "That is the noblest specimen of boy my eyes have ever rested upon. I have never seen such perfect youth mingled with such wisdom of spirit." We all looked approval, and as Joseph of Arimathea walked away with me later he said: "What would I not give to have a son like that boy who was with us this morning." And I sighed, knowing of his own dear boy who had died while yet a little child.

II

Eighteen years passed before I again saw the face of that beautiful boy, now grown into a strong man. I had been hearing rumors

from time to time of a young Rabbi named Jesus, in the region of Galilee, who was doing wonderful works and creating great excitement by his sayings. I was much interested in what I heard of him, and determined if ever opportunity offered I would see and hear him.

One morning, during the Feast of the Tents, I was on my way from my home down to the Temple when I saw a group of men and boys approaching excitedly. All seemed to be watching the conduct of a young man who had been born blind, and to whom I had often given alms as he sat begging at the side of the street. He was now led by two men and seemed himself to be greatly excited. When I met this constantly increasing group, I asked the blind beggar what it meant. "Oh, Rabbi Nicodemus," he exclaimed (for I had often paused to converse with him and had told him my name and he knew my voice), "a wonderful thing has happened. My two friends came along a little while ago and said, 'Jesus of Nazareth has come to the feast, and it is told that in Galilee He has healed many blind people, and we thought that if we took you to Him when He was working cures, He might open your eyes.' And just then I heard the

tramp of feet and one said, 'Here is Jesus now.' And, while I stood wondering, they paused near me and some one said: 'Master, here is a man who was born blind. Was it on account of his own sins or the sins of his parents?' And Jesus said: 'Neither this man nor his parents were special sinners, but here is an opportunity to work the will of Him who sent me while the day lasts, for I am the light of the world.' And when He had said that, I heard a soft sigh, and He took up a handful of dust from the ground and moistened it with the spittle from His mouth and anointed my blind eyes with a touch softer than my own mother's, and said, in the tenderest voice I ever heard, 'Go wash your eyes in the Pool of Siloam.' And I am on my way there. Oh, Rabbi Nicodemus, perhaps it will come true and I will receive my sight!"

I wanted to see what would happen and said, "Then let us hasten to the pool." And we all went on through the fountain gate to the pool with the water flowing into it through the stone arches. We stopped beside the pool and the blind man, led up to the edge of the rock, stooped down, and, gathering the water in his hands, quickly washed the dirt from his

sightless eyes with hands trembling and shaking with hope. I had taken my place just across the pool from him and saw him when he arose to his feet and saw the first light come into his opened eyes. He stretched out his hands, moving them back and forth and shouting, "What's that? It moves! I see! I see! It's true! It's true! I am blind no more!" Then one of his friends looked close into his face and said, "Look at me! Do you see me?" "Let me feel you," said the man who had been born blind. Feeling with his fingers carefully over his friend's face, he shouted joyously, "Yes, Levi, it is you that I see! Oh, God be praised, I must go home. All my life I have wanted to look on the face of my mother and my father. Take me to them." And as the three friends hurried away, we all followed, I as eager as the rest.

We came to a very humble place, for the beggar's family were very poor, and when we drew near, it went to my heart as I heard the young man cry, "Mother! mother! Come to me! I can see! I can see!" And as she stood excited, but astonished and confused, looking at him, he burst loose from his friends and ran toward her, shouting and crying and telling

his story. I shall never forget that scene. Mother and son embraced each other again and again and the tears coursed down my own cheeks as the man who had been blind all his life and had never been able to see his mother's face passed his hands in loving caresses over her beloved face and feasted his eyes on her features and cried, "My mother! My mother! My beautiful mother!"

III

At last I turned and left the place with a heart filled at once with emotion because of the joyous scene I had just witnessed, and with wonder at the marvelous miracle which had been wrought. More than ever I wished to see Jesus, to whom the blind man who had received his sight ascribed his cure, the latter phases of which I had seen with my own eyes. "I must go to the Temple," I said to myself. "No doubt I will find him there."

On account of the Feast, Jerusalem was crowded with strangers from all over the country for many miles in every direction. As I proceeded, my mood changed from one of joy to sadness as I thought of the profanation of the Temple. It had come to be a scandal that

many of the priests of our religion had given themselves over to greedy traffic with the people who came to the holy city and to the Temple to worship at times like this. Even the changing of money for people coming from a distance to pay their annual tax was made the occasion of heavy usury—sometimes as much as one shekel from every ten; and men were pointed out who had grown rich in a short time in such banking. Greedy priests sometimes conspired together until they would gather up all the doves in the market at the feast times, so that the poor people who could not afford anything more costly than a dove for sacrifice had been known to have to pay a hundred times as much for their sacrificial offering as the priests themselves had paid to those who had reared them.

The quiet and stillness of the holy place, where an atmosphere of reverent silence induced the spirit of worship, was now broken by the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep and goats, and the shouts and cries of men and women seeking to get the best of each other in bargaining over the animals intended as an offering for the sins of repentant souls. Instead of an atmosphere of prayer, it was

noisy with the din of shrewd bargaining and angry expostulation. Instead of eyes full of reverence, one saw cupidity, covetousness, and greed in multitudes of faces.

This evil condition had been going from bad to worse for many years until it was an open sore, and yet there was no outbreak against it. Thinking of these things I, who had always been cool-blooded and conservative, even in my youth, felt to the depths of my soul the need of reform as I drew near the entrance of the Temple.

Then suddenly I saw issuing through the Temple doors a mob of excited men. Some of them I recognized as old-time money-changers; and others, those who for years had been among the most greedy and avaricious speculators in sacrificial animals. They were evidently almost crazed with anger mingled with fear. Their curses and hoarse cries filled the air. What had driven these money-getters from their tables and their stalls at a time when every moment was fruitful in profit? Filled with astonishment I pushed my way through the crowds about the Temple doors until I could see within.

There I beheld a sight that has remained

vivid to me through all the years. A young Rabbi was driving the great herd of traffickers before Him, as a cattle-driver from the hills might lash a drove of frightened steers into flight. How can I picture Him? He was a man in the full vigor of youthful maturity, not more than thirty years of age. He was a man of powerful build, strong, sturdy, and glowing with perfect health. His legs were stalwart, His uplifted arm showed splendid muscular development, and His hand, long-fingered and finely molded, held in tense grip a whip of braided cords which He made to hiss through the air above their heads or to sting the cheeks of the frightened traffickers. He would come up to a table where the money-changer still sat in defiance, and with a single turn of His strong hand overturn it and send the silver rolling across the floor. Above the curses and angry shouts I heard His musical but vibrant, magnetic voice ring out strong and clear and commanding: "Be gone! Out with you! This is my Father's house, built for prayer and worship, a place for men and women to find forgiveness for sin, but you have made it a place for merchandise, a den of thieves and robbers!"

I shall never forget the look on His face as He uttered these scorching words. His face was tanned and sunburned, evidently from being much in the open air. His wonderful eyes flashed with emotion; but it was the moral force and power of the man more than the strong whip of braided cords in His hand that drove these greedy traders from the Temple.

There was something about His face that seemed familiar and made me feel I had seen it before, but where I could not recall. From those about me I soon learned that this was Jesus. He was the great, conspicuous figure of the Feast that day, and I scarcely let Him out of my sight all day long.

I came across Joseph of Arimathea, my best friend, and after that we were together. Jesus wrought many miracles that day, and there was about Him something so sincere and genuine that I found it hard not to feel that there was a certain greatness or divinity in Him. All day I was haunted with the feeling that I had seen Him before, and I remarked of that feeling to Joseph, who immediately said, "I feel the same way. I am sure that

somewhere I have seen those eyes and heard that voice."

Finally, toward evening, when Jesus had been saying to a crowd who had gathered about Him that tho the Temple were destroyed He could rebuild it in three days, Joseph turned to me with a flash of remembrance and said: "Now I know where I saw Him. It was many years ago here in the Temple. Strange you should not remember! This is the boy who joined in our conversation about the prophecies of the Messiah in the school of Hillel; and when we were all so interested in the boy's questions, His father and mother came seeking Him, and He went away with them. Yes, He is just about the right age. That boy was about twelve and now He would be thirty. It is eighteen years ago. I thought Him a remarkable youth then. He is still remarkable. We must not lose track of Him this time."

IV

And we were not to lose sight of Him. The very next morning I was called to a secret meeting of the Great Council, held behind closed doors. Rabbi Simon, the son of Hillel, presided. He opened the meeting by saying:

"This meeting is secret; a matter of importance must be decided. The Council, as you know, is set to watch for errors of doctrine and guard the unlearned from deception. Now there is in the city a young man from Galilee who is stirring up excitement by His conduct and His followers are calling Him a prophet and a worker of miracles. What shall we do?"

Rabbi Eliezar was the first to speak: "This Jesus can not be from God, because He breaks the Sabbath day by healing the sick. He ridicules the holy day, and says: 'Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man.' Such language and conduct will soon bring the Sabbath into disrepute. Only yesterday He pretended to heal a blind man by anointing his eyes with mud made with His spittle and the dust, and sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam; and the man's friends say he is healed. Such work on the Sabbath is contrary to the law."

The scene I had witnessed at the pool where the blind beggar began to see, and his later meeting with his mother was so fresh in my mind that I could not keep silent, but was moved to reply: "How can Rabbi Eliezar be

so sure that it is a breaking of the Sabbath to heal the sick on that day? Among all the works that are specified that must not be done on the Sabbath, the healing of the sick is not mentioned."

Tho I made this remark with all gentleness and courtesy, not wishing to stir up anger, Eliezar became very angry and retorted: "I am astonished that so prudent a man as Rabbi Nicodemus has ever been should defend a Sabbath-breaker and disturber of the peace!"

Hoping to avoid strife, I suggested quietly, "Why not send for the blind man who claims to be healed?" To this every one agreed. The blind man was immediately sent for and soon appeared in the outer court with his parents and a group of neighbors; but he was ushered into the presence of the Council alone.

Rabbi Simon instructed him that he must be careful to tell only the exact truth, and bade him proceed in his own way to tell the story of his healing. Immediately the man's face lighted up with delight, and with ringing, happy tones he told the story of how he had met Jesus, who had made mud with the dust and had put it on his eyes and told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, and

how when he obeyed he had received his sight. The testimony was so open and frank and joyous, his gratitude and happiness so profound, that it was impossible not to believe that he spoke the truth.

But this very frankness made Eliezar and those others who were great sticklers for the letter of the law all the more angered, and one said to him, "Give God the glory for your sight. The man Jesus is a sinner." But the man who was healed laughed aloud joyously and cried, "I know not whether He be a sinner, but one thing I know; whereas I was born blind, now I see and can behold the face of my father and my mother!"

The more liberal-minded men in the Council, I saw, were deeply impressed by the testimony of the happy young man, and, thinking to deepen that impression, I suggested that it might be wise to call in the father and mother. This, too, met with favor, and when they were brought in, Rabbi Simon asked them, "Is this your son?"

"Yes," they answered.

"Is it true that he was born blind?"

"Yes, it is true."

"How did he receive his sight?"

But, catching the scowling looks of Eliezar and some of the others, and fearing their displeasure, the father spoke and said, "He is of age, ask him."

Again they questioned the young man, but only to receive the same joyous answer, giving praise to Jesus. Baffled in the attempt to prove that the young Rabbi from Galilee had acted unlawfully, the young man and his parents were dismissed, and the Council adjourned after passing a resolution to exclude any one from the Temple who should call Jesus the Christ, for there were those among His followers openly proclaiming that this was the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets. For myself, I went thoughtfully away from the Council meeting, determined to go that night alone to see Jesus.

V

By inquiry, I found that every night Jesus lodged in the house of a man who was known to a friend of mine, and by his aid I secured the promise of Jesus to receive me alone that evening. I went alone at night for two reasons: first, because the young Rabbi Himself was evidently avoiding publicity; and,

second, because if I were seen with Jesus it would anger some members of the Council and arouse enmity against both Jesus and myself."

Jesus received me with an air of gentleness and dignity that I have never seen equaled. I felt both honored and comforted by it. The room was dark, the feeble lamp shedding a very dim light; but with those wonderful eyes of Jesus illuminating His noble face there seemed no need of other light. They were not staring or suspicious, but globes of honesty and frankness. So deeply did He impress me that all the cautious questions which I had mentally formulated to test Him vanished out of my thought.

Those honest eyes demanded equal honesty from me, and I soon found myself pouring out my inmost thought to Him without any reserve whatever. I told Him I had both heard of His good works and seen them and was convinced that He was a teacher sent from God. He smiled sadly and said, "It is strange how people can believe only by the signs and wonders that they see. What will you think when you see me cast out and rejected?"

"But, Rabbi," I said, "is not the Christ to be king and to rule the world?"

“Yes, I will be king,” He replied, “but my kingdom is not of this world; it is a spiritual kingdom which is to rule men’s souls. In order to enter into this spiritual kingdom men need to be born again—to be born of the Spirit.”

And as I listened to Him speaking of the kingdom from above that would change men’s actions by getting control of their hearts by a new birth of love, a great longing took hold on my very soul. “Master,” I cried out, “I am too old for such changes as that. Just as it is impossible for a man to enter again his mother’s womb and be born, so it is impossible for a man at my age to change all the thoughts and habits of his life.”

But Jesus said patiently, “It may be impossible to men, but nothing is impossible to God. As the wind bloweth where it listeth and you hear the sound but can not tell whence it comes or whither it goes, so noiselessly can the Holy Spirit come to man’s heart and change hate to love and despair to hope.”

I shall never forget the tenderness and patience with which He opened to me the beauties of the spiritual kingdom, saying to me, “You must become as a little child with

humble, reverent spirit if you would know of the things in the realm of the Spirit."

At last I went out from His presence, feeling that I had been with one who was near to God and had a right to say, "I and my Father are one."

* * * * *

But the enmity in high places developed rapidly; the sticklers for the law came to hate Jesus. Every good deed that He wrought that made Him more popular with the people increased the hatred against Him. The Council determined to pursue Him to the death. Both my friend Joseph of Arimathea and I did what we could to turn the tide of persecution, but it only served to turn suspicion and hatred on us as well. Finally I went with Joseph into the country for a day's rest, and on our return we found that Jesus was condemned to be crucified.

Joseph and I were in deep sorrow. We blamed ourselves for not being more outspoken than we had been in His behalf. What an awful day that was! Jesus hung between two common malefactors.

In the afternoon Joseph said to me, "I can

endure this no longer. I am determined to do what little I can. I shall go to Pilate and ask for the body that I may give it a proper burial at least."

"Very well, my friend," I replied, "then I shall go with you."

And we went and asked Pilate for the body and he gave his consent.

I shall never forget the solemn, sacred hour when we wrapped His splendid body in grave clothes and laid Him away in the tomb.

I remembered His wonderful prophecy that in three days He would rise; and when the tomb was closed I said to Joseph, "My friend, I have a deep feeling that this tomb will not hold Him long. I do not see how it can be, but I am coming to hope and to believe that this Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, and that He will keep His prophecy to rise from the dead."

To this Joseph said, "It is with God."

Then they came with the Roman guard and put the seal on the tomb and the soldiers took up their watch to keep a dead man in his grave.

Then came the hours of suspense. And at

last, on the Sabbath, the cry rang through the city that the tomb was empty! The priests declared the body had been stolen by the disciples, but neither Joseph nor I believed it. Searching for some of the disciples whom I knew, I saw John one day and questioned him as to the whereabouts of the Christ. He said, "He is alive forevermore." There was something so exalted and exultant in his tone and aspect that I knew here was no mourner for a dead master.

And often after that I was with John and the other friends of Jesus. And one morning a little later a company of the friends of Jesus were together holding a morning meeting for prayer. Joseph was there with me. The doors were closed; but suddenly while we prayed Jesus was with us. He stood there in our midst with the old, tender, loving smile on His glorious face. We were startled and afraid for a moment, but He stretched out His hands with the prints of the nails in the palms and said gently, "Peace, brethren, don't be afraid, it is not a spirit. See, it is my body! Handle me! A spirit has neither flesh nor bones." And while the very joy of it all made us timid, He said, "Have you any food?

Give me something to eat." And Peter leaped forward at that and brought Him a piece of broiled fish, and Jesus took it and ate it. Then he talked with us and recalled how He had foretold that He would suffer and die but would rise again, and showed us how that this was in fulfilment of the prophecies. Then He told us that He must be preached everywhere and men would repent and receive forgiveness of their sins. "Go into all nations, tell the story of my sufferings and death and resurrection to the ends of the earth, and wherever you go there I shall be with you. I will send the power of the Holy Spirit upon you and He will comfort and sustain you."

Then looking tenderly upon us until each one of us felt His personal recognition and love, He turned away, saying: "Follow me. I would see you all at Bethany."

We followed him. Oh, my soul, what a hallowed walk was that! At last we drew to the summit of the Mount of Olives. He looked for a moment out over the beautiful landscape and then back tenderly upon the group of friends about Him. Then He lifted His hands as if in prayer, and as He blessed us, saying, "My peace be upon you," He was

gently lifted into the air, and as He ascended a cloud received Him out of our sight.

As with tearful eyes we watched where we had seen Him disappear, two bright beings clothed in white, whom we instinctively felt must be angels from heaven, stood in our midst and one of them said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This Jesus who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Then the angels also vanished. We were alone, yet we were not alone. Our hearts were full of joy, and with one accord we went back to the city to tarry for the power that Jesus had promised should come upon us to fit us for our life mission to carry His name to the ends of the earth.

Jesus and
John the
Baptist



Andrea del Sarto, 1487-1531

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways . . .

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel. *Luke I, 76, 80.*

IV

Jesus and John the Baptist

I

The Baptism of Jesus



N ALL the portrait gallery of the Bible there is no more picturesque personality than that of John the Baptist. Like Elijah in his sudden appearance before King Ahab, John leaps full grown into the midst of the affairs of his time and takes a leading rôle. He is born, and in childhood disappears into the wilderness and the desert, and we do not hear of him again until thirty years later, when he comes out of the wilderness a strong, rugged man, full of fire and magnetic force, driven by his great message from God to call men to repentance and prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Try to picture him in your imagination: A rude, elemental man, a man's man, no trace

of the schools or of the courts or of polite society. A man accustomed to live and sleep in the open air. A man who knows the desert and the wilderness, who knows the birds and the beasts of the lone, solitary places, who has camped out where the lions roared in their search for their prey. A man who has held much communion with his own soul and with his Maker. A man who knows God and fears Him, but does not tremble before the face of man. I can see him standing beside the turbulent little River Jordan—a tall, lean man, with a face no man would care to tamper with, a lithe body, no surplus flesh, browned from the sun and the open air, a coarse camel's hair cloak around his shoulders, a leather girdle about his loins, with arms and legs bare and browned as his face, and muscles hard and lean from his daily food of locusts and wild honey.

He begins to denounce the sins of the day, and those who hear are so startled and aroused to interest that they tell others, who also come to hear this wild, rude prophet of the wilderness, who seems to speak with a strange authority of righteousness, of sin, and of repentance. Every man who hears him

goes home to spread the news. The crowds grow, and those who come to laugh or to scoff stay to repent and be baptized as a token of their espousal of a life of genuineness and truth.

John is a plain speaker; he does not mince his words. When he sees the aristocratic, cold-hearted Pharisees and Saducees coming, not only to hear his plain, heart-searching sermons, but paying the tribute of their tears and offering themselves as candidates for baptism, he meets them with the stern demand: "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruit worthy of repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the ax lieth at the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly

cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

And then Jesus comes down over the trail, winding His way over the shelving, rocky wall to the edge of the river where John stands.

So far as we know, this is the first time John has seen Jesus. Picture the scene! Here is one of the great dramatic and historic scenes of all human history. Jesus comes toward John, who gazes upon Him with awe. What a man Jesus must have been! The son of Mary, the Son of God, the young carpenter of Nazareth, strong, vigorous, pure-faced, clear-eyed, sinless—a beautiful, glorious personality, manhood at its best; and something more, for the breath of heaven is on His brow and the inner light from a soul in tune with God beams in His countenance.

Something tells John that the great hour in his life has struck; that the personage for which his whole life has been but to prepare the way, for which he himself is only a voice from the wilderness, crying "Make ye ready the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight;" is coming even now to meet him.

The crowd senses something unusual.

John's face shows his intense interest—it glows with a reverent, holy flame as he exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water.”

Then Jesus draws still nearer and asks to be baptized. John draws back saying, “I need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” But Jesus turns on John the glorious smile of His matchless face, and says: “Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”

John yields and with trembling hands performs his sacred task. As Jesus comes up from the river His face is lifted in prayer, and the heavens open in the sky above Him, and a white dove flies down through the floor of heaven and alights for a moment gently on the Master's head, and out of the heavens comes the Divine Voice, saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And as Jesus climbs the sloping banks of Jordan, John, with glowing face, says to the crowds

who have been looking on and wondering: "He that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The next day Jesus passed by in sight of John and his disciples, and John pointed the disciples to Jesus and said: "Behold the Lamb of God!" And the two men to whom he spoke immediately followed after Jesus and became His disciples.

A little later when some people came to John and told him that all men were flocking after Christ, thinking, no doubt, that they would make him jealous, John quietly answered: "A man can receive nothing except it have been given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but, that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease."

When we read those wonderful words of John the Baptist we can understand why Jesus said later: "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

II

John Before Herod

The Bible record does not give us any of the details of John's appearance in Herod's court, but only tells that he did appear there, something of his brave message to the wicked king, of Herod's interest in John, and intention to hear him again, and of the holding of John in prison, and something of the circumstances of his death; but enough is given that it is very easy for us to paint the picture for ourselves.

This is the way I think it came about: Herod had been interested for some time in what he had heard about John, and John's growing popularity had made him uneasy. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, was a woman of an unusually good mind and one who was inclined to be religious. She was not satisfied either with the teaching of the Sadducees or the cold, hollow formalism of the

Pharisees, and when she heard of John's earnest gospel of repentance of sin and of righteousness of life she went to hear him and was so moved by his preaching that she was, herself, baptized into this new effort for a good life. She came home and told her husband, and he talked about it to the other officers of the royal household, and so it came about that Herod heard every day of the growing interest in John's preaching and of the fact that many prominent religious leaders among the Jews were so influenced by the magnetic exhortations to repentance uttered by John that they had presented themselves for baptism, and he had had a grim laugh at the cool way John had received them and called them "a generation of vipers." When Herod heard that, he said: "I like that fellow's courage, anyway. I would like to have seen some of those stiffnecked old Pharisees that think they are the last word in religion when John threw that into their teeth." And so Herod, wishing to keep track of this strange excitement among the people, told his steward to encourage his wife in attending the meetings and to report to him anything new or interesting in regard to them.

So one day Joanna came home more enthusiastic than ever and said: "Husband dear, I wish you had been with me to-day. A very wonderful thing happened at the meetings being held by John the Baptist."

"What was that?" inquired the steward.

"Why, while John was baptizing, and there were more candidates than ever, for the crowd was the largest I have seen there, Jesus, a young Rabbi whom some think to be a prophet, came, and when John saw Him he seemed greatly excited and pointed to Him as He came, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,' and when every one was looking at Him, John went on to say that this was the one for whom he came to prepare the way and who was greater than he.

"The Rabbi Jesus came right on up and asked to be baptized, and John acted very strange about it. He did not seem to want to baptize Rabbi Jesus—indeed, I thought at first he was going to refuse. I was standing very close and I heard it all. John said to Jesus: 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' But Jesus insisted and said: 'Let it be as I ask, for we must

fulfil all righteousness,' and then John baptized Him, but I could see that he trembled and that he was deeply moved. When Jesus started up out of the water, after He was baptized, the sky seemed to open overhead and I saw a beautiful dove as white as the snow on Mount Lebanon in winter come flying down and light on Jesus' head and a voice sweet as music come from above: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And, oh, husband! I never saw a face so beautiful and holy as the face of Jesus then. I felt like falling on my knees before Him and worshipping Him as God."

The steward was a worldly man, fond of his wife, but who knew nothing about religious matters, and when he told his story to Herod, the only impression Herod got was that John was drawing dangerous crowds and needed to be looked after; so he sent a centurion with some soldiers and had John brought before him to the palace.

That is one of the great historic scenes I would like to have witnessed. I can see Herod at his table, a big, burly man with a full face, with the red lines of self-indulgence running here and there in his cheeks; but with

a coward's eye, showing the man who loves the pleasures of sin, but whose conscience often drives him and torments him and will not let him enjoy the sins he loves. There he sits, in the place of power. He holds the life of this preacher in his hands, but he does not begin to look as composed or as fearless as his prisoner.

John, lean and lank from the wilderness camp, with a keen, thin face, unshaved, with eyes that glow like a mountain lion's, as piercing as those of an eagle of the desert, stands there studying the sinner before him with unflinching attention.

Herod looks at this strange man of the wilderness, astonished that such a rude creature could stir up so much excitement, and says: "Who are you? What is your purpose? What are you trying to do?"

John throws back his head and replies: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah."

"Why have you been preaching repentance?"

"Because the land is full of wickedness, and

only repentance unto righteousness can save it."

And in the conversation that follows, Herod says, I can imagine: "That was a mighty sharp thing you said to those old hypocrites, the Pharisees, when you called them 'a generation of vipers.' I liked that."

John straightens up to reply, but just then Herodias, Herod's new wife, comes into the room and looks curiously at the strange, uncouth evangelist. John turns his searching gaze into her cruel, sensuous face for a moment, giving her a creepy feeling, and then looks back to Herod. He stiffens through his whole body; he lifts his long, lean right arm, bare and bronzed, above his head and brings it slowly down until his index finger points straight at Herod's bloated face, and in a voice of suppressed thunder he says: "Herod, you need not go to the Pharisees to find sinners who need to repent. You can find them nearer home."

Herod and Herodias look with alarm into each other's face for a moment, and Herod blusteringly queries: "What are you saying?"

"I say," thunders John, "that you, Herod, are a sinner against God for living with that

woman, your brother Philip's wife, with whom you dwell in shameful sin. Repent! Turn from your sins! Else you can not escape the damnation of hell!"

The faces of the sensual lovers blanch for a moment. Then, in fierce wrath, Herodias turns on Herod, "Fool that he is, he shall die for that! If he does not, your professed love for me is a mockery."

But Herod's conscience is not entirely dead yet—besides he is afraid to put John to death for fear of an insurrection among the people. So he turns to the officer of the guard and tells him to take John away to prison. White and trembling and conscience-stricken, he says to John: "This is a terrible thing you have said to me. I will hear more from you later when I have more time."

And he waves the prisoner and the guard out of his presence.

III

John in Prison

Prison life was a terrible experience to John the Baptist. Accustomed to life in the open, most of his days and nights spent in the

wilderness where he could breathe deep the fresh air of heaven, where he could commune with the stars, watch the sunrise in the morning and see it depart in glory at night, to such a man the four walls of a prison were unbearable.

It was like taking an eagle, accustomed to sharpen his beak on some granite peak of the high mountains, and placing him in a narrow cage in a garden with never a chance to try his wings in flight or catch the sun in his eye. So we do not wonder that, shut up in prison, John became depressed and full of gloom and was beset with doubts. I can imagine him saying to himself: "I wonder if I have not taken too much for granted. I ought to have questioned Jesus more closely than I did. It was all so wonderful that morning when He came to the Jordan and asked to be baptized. As I gazed into His wonderful face I did not doubt for a moment. It seemed as tho I had known Him always. I felt so sure that He was the Messiah for whom I was sent to open the way that I did not ask Him a single question. And when I saw the dove descending from the open heavens upon Him and heard the voice I had been told to expect wit-

nessing to Him as the Son of God, I never thought to follow Him up with questions. But it is all so strange for me to be shut up here in prison, and He never to come near to inquire. Oh, if I only knew! When some of my faithful disciples come to-day I shall ask them to go and find Jesus and ask Him the plain question whether He is really the Messiah."

And so John sent his disciples in search of Jesus.

It was not hard to find Jesus in those days, for He left a broad path wherever He went. Some traveler in Africa says that it is no trouble to trail an elephant, for he leaves a broad path. Plantations and gardens despoiled, trees torn out by the roots and other similar signs cause men to say: "An elephant has passed this way." But it was a different trail that Jesus left—a broad trail of healing and blessing, a trail marked by rejoicing hearts and happy homes. These disciples of John happened to come to where Jesus was just as He was giving instructions to His twelve disciples to go forth on their mission of blessing both to the bodies and souls of men. These instructions were not given in private,

but a great multitude were gathered about, listening.

And as He concluded this address, the disciples of John pushed through the crowd to the front with the question: "John the Baptist has been thrust into prison by Herod, and he sent us to ask, 'Art thou He that cometh, or look we for another?'"

And then Jesus, looking on them tenderly, said: "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."

The men pressed back through the crowd to carry their convincing message to their master. Jesus turned to the listening crowd and exclaimed: "What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. But wherefore went ye out? to see a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet: This is he of whom it

is written, 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.' Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."

IV

The Feast of Herod

Birthdays come regularly whether we wish them or not. No doubt Herod would have stayed the march of time if he could; but since he could not, like many another both before and since his day, he sought to use his birthday to intrench himself the more firmly in his position as governor. So he made a great feast in celebration of his birthday. It was not a dinner, but a supper; and to it he invited not only all the great officials of the country, but the army officers and other distinguished men of the nation over which he ruled. It was a big affair and a brilliant scene. In accordance with the customs of the time, dancing women had been provided to entertain Herod and his guests.

Now, unknown to Herod, his wife, the wicked woman whom he had taken from his

own brother, had looked forward to this feast as a time when she would trap Herod into giving her the vengeance she desired on John the Baptist. She had already sought to have John put to death, but Herod was not willing to do it. From the moment John had pointed at her in the palace and said to Herod: "It is not lawful for you to have her," she had hated John with an indescribable hatred and had never given up her determination to wreak vengeance on him for his brave, bold words. So in her vile heart she had brooded over it, and when this birthday feast was arranged she said to herself, "This is my chance. Herod is afraid to kill John because of his popularity with the people; in the bottom of his heart he has conscientious scruples that make him a coward; if he was to hear John denounce our marriage again, he might divorce me. I shall never have another good night's sleep until that preacher is dead. But I will manage it. I will watch the feast and see that the wine is passed frequently, and when Herod is just drunk enough to be jolly and boastful, I will have a surprise for him. And then I will get a promise out of him that will put an end to John's preaching." Then she

went to her daughter, Salome, and said: "I want you to learn a new dance that Herod has never seen, and at just the right time you must follow the dancing women and capture his fancy." And the girl, who delighted in attention and display, set about the task with a light heart.

The great night came, and all went as Herodias planned. Herod became intoxicated with the wine and the lights and the flattery, and at a favorable moment, Salome, his beautiful stepdaughter, entered in place of the dancing woman and caught his drunken, lecherous fancy with a dance of graceful abandon and seductive charm surpassing anything that had preceded it.

The half-drunken guests about him cheered her to the echo, and Herod, proud of her evident capture of the applause of his guests, asked what he should give her. "That's right," shouted an officer of the guard whom Herodias had instructed, "ask for something worth while." And as Herodias had foreseen, this served to spur Herod's pride and he shouted: "Ask what you will, for I swear I will give you whatever you ask, unto the half of my kingdom." While Salome, blush-

ing and happy, wondered what to ask, the officer who was in the plot said in a low voice, "Inquire of your mother what to ask." So she ran to her mother, saying, "Mother, what great thing shall I ask?" Here was the opportunity so carefully planned. "Child," Herodias replied, "I will give you later what you most desire; but now, hold Herod to his word. Ask for the head of John the Baptizer on a platter."

And the girl, with accustomed obedience, immediately repeated the demand to Herod.

Drunk as he was, Herod was shocked and worried at the totally unexpected answer. Had he been sober, he would have refused; but half drunk, and overawed by the guests who had heard his oath, against his own desire and better judgment he gave the command that sent the executioner to the prison to kill John.

Now when John's disciples came back with the answer of Jesus, John was comforted and happy. So, when he was aroused from his sleep at midnight and he saw the executioner, sword in hand, entering the prison, he was ready to be offered up. He had fulfilled his mission. He had prepared the way for the Messiah. With his own hands he had bap-

tized his Lord for His entrance on His great mission as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

I can hear him say to the officer, who regrets his task: "Do not be sorry; do your duty. I would not change places with Herod to-night. I am changing a prison cell for the freedom of the skies. I have fought a good fight. My work is done. Strike quickly, and I will be with the God who sent me to my work." A flash of the keen blade and the cruel deed is done. Back to the feast hall the soldier carries on a platter the bleeding head of as brave a man as ever proclaimed the truth to sinners. Salome, shuddering, receives the gruesome prize and carries it to her mother. Herodias does not shudder nor quail. Steeped and hardened in sin, her hatred pursues John even after death, for, so St. Jerome tells us, she takes from her headdress a long, sharp pin and with a vicious thrust pierces the protruding tongue of John the Baptist, and even Herod shudders as she exclaims, "There, that tongue will never denounce me again!"

V

Herod's Ghost

The ministry of Jesus proceeded; the news of His deeds of healing and mercy filled the conversation of the people, and Christ became the most conspicuous figure in the country. During this period, some time after Herod's feast which had brought about the death of John, Herod's steward came to him with further news of the wonderful works of Christ.

"My lord," said the steward, "you may remember that I told you of my wife's interest in John the Baptist, and that you asked me to encourage her in it so that we might know all that he did. But since John's death, this other man, Jesus, is attracting still more attention than John did. Joanna, my wife, says that John always claimed that he was merely preparing the way for the Christ, and now this man claims to be the Christ. John worked no miracles, but Christ does many wonderful things. My wife is great friends with several highly respectable women who believe in Him, and who furnish money for the needs of Him and His disciples. And now there seems to be no doubt that He has

worked some wonderful miracles. He has changed water into wine at a wedding."

"My! He would be handy to have around if the wine was short," Herod chuckled, with an unbelieving wink.

"But, my lord," continued the steward, seriously: "He has done many things much more important. He has opened the eyes of many blind people. He has cleansed lepers. He has made lame men to walk. He has cast out devils. A well-to-do woman, Mary of Magdala, of whom my wife is very fond, had seven devils cast out; and now, to show her gratitude, she devotes herself to furnishing the money to support Christ and His disciples. Also, He has cured fevers and raised to life a daughter of Jairus whom the doctors had pronounced dead."

As the steward went on with this wonderful story of the miracles of Jesus, Herod dropped his air of indifference and became more and more excited until, when he came to the bringing back of Jairus' daughter to life, he sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "I know who he is, he's John the Baptizer, whom I beheaded, fool that I was!"

"But, my lord, it can not be that man, for

he is dead. I, myself, saw his disciples bury his body."

"I know all that," cried Herod, his eyes standing out in his terror, "but I tell you it is John. If he could raise that girl from the dead, he could raise himself! It is John, I tell you! I had him beheaded, and I saw that bloody head on the platter that night at my birthday feast, and oh, my God! I saw Herodias take her pin from her hair and stab through the dead man's tongue! But now he is risen from the dead, and he it is who is doing these miracles."

And then a look of still deeper horror and fright filled the face of Herod. His arm shot out and he pointed to the opposite wall of the room, shouting hoarsely, "See, there he is now! He's come for his vengeance!" The steward said, "Where, my lord? I see nothing on the wall!"

"There! There!" shouted Herod backing away. "There on that wall is the bloody head of John the Baptizer whom I slew! It comes to me in the night so that I can not sleep, but now, it comes in the daytime, also! Oh wretched fool that I was to slay an honest man who merely told me the truth!"

Christ's
First
Sermon

V

Christ's First Sermon



THE FIRST Christian revival of religion was a two days' mission in Sychar, where for the first time Jesus revealed His Messiahship, announcing it to a sinful woman, through whose awakening the whole community was aroused within forty-eight hours and became Christian believers.

From Sychar Jesus and His disciples came back to Galilee, and on the way He warned them that no prophet has honor in his own country and among his own people. But on His first appearance in the synagogues of Galilee He was warmly welcomed and did many works of mercy and healing, and many believed on Him and became His devoted friends. But the heart of Jesus was in Nazareth, where He had been brought up. He desired that His first public proclamation of the fact that He was the Messiah should be made in the synagogue that He had attended every

Sabbath day for many years, where His mother and His brothers and sisters and His old neighbors could hear.

The news of His deeds and sayings at the feast in Jerusalem, and more recently of the miracle at the wedding in Cana where He turned the water into wine, had filled the little town of Nazareth with much gossip and interest, and the desire to see Him and hear what He had to say for Himself was intense. Whenever a little group gathered at the fountain or at the village store or in the street, He was the main subject of discussion. Some would enlarge on the beauty and purity of His life from boyhood, others on the fidelity and skill with which He wrought as a carpenter; but many sneered, and said, "I will have to see some of His miracles myself before I will believe a Nazareth carpenter, with whom I have worked as long as I have with Jesus, has suddenly blossomed out into a Messiah." So one evening the news was spread abroad that Jesus and His group of disciples had arrived in Nazareth and would no doubt be at the synagogue on Sabbath morning. There was great excitement in the homes of the village. The next morning, when the



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THE SON OF A CARPENTER

Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? *Matthew XIII, 55.*

hour arrived for worship, the little synagogue was filled. Even the side allotted to the men was as crowded as the side where the women and girls sat behind the lattice-work partition, shrouded modestly in their long veils.

Think of Mary's feelings as she waited, hoping against hope that something would occur that morning to satisfy and fulfil the promise that had throbbed in her heart ever since the shepherds and the wise men had worshiped her babe thirty years before. It had been a long, long wait, and she had wondered, and pondered, and had often been puzzled and almost discouraged.

How her heart must have been in her throat when, after the first lesson from the law had been read, Jesus and His disciples having entered, her noble Son stepped forward to read the lesson from the prophets. The attendant, the clerk of the little Nazareth synagogue, who had known Jesus all his life, and who could not keep from smiling at the sight of Him as reader in that place, procured for Him the roll of the prophet Isaiah and placed it in His hands! Jesus unrolled it and faced the audience, which stood reverently as He began to read. This lesson could be, according to

custom, from three to twenty-one verses; but Jesus read less than two. Yet how it must have excited the thought of every quick-witted man and woman who listened as He read:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings
to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the
captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the
Lord.”

When he had finished reading, Jesus handed the roll back to the attendant and sat down to speak, as was the custom of the time. His first words drew every eye upon Him in great interest and excitement, for the first words of His sermon were: “To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.”

All their lives they had been looking forward with more or less intensity of interest to the coming of the Messiah; and to have this young carpenter, who for eighteen years had been working at His trade among them, and for them, claim with such absolute assurance that He was Himself that Messiah, and that all these great prophecies were fulfilled in

Him, was so astounding that at first they were held in dumb surprize.

The second sensation of that wonderful hour in the Nazareth synagogue was their discovery of Jesus' eloquence and wisdom in speech. They had not expected that. He had never been sent away to Jerusalem to any of the great teachers. His life had been spent, since His twelfth year, in a carpenter's shop and in carpenter work about the village; and as they listened to the eloquence and grace and wisdom with which He unfolded the prophecies, they were at first swept away on the buoyant waves of His persuasive speech. But, after a little, when it began to sink into their comprehension that He was really claiming to be the Messiah Himself, all the disgust and wrath of their natures was aroused. To them the idea was utterly absurd. One man turned to another saying, "What do you think of that? Has Israel been waiting all these years for a carpenter Messiah? Bah!"

"He had better stick to His ox-yokes," was his neighbor's reply.

Another nudged the man next him and said, half aloud; "Look at His brothers; see the astonished and disgusted look on their faces!

See the look of amazement on the face of James! Notice how annoyed Joses and Simon are! And no wonder! The town carpenter at Nazareth to claim to be the Messiah, King of the Jews!"

Another said: "Poor old Joseph! He was just a plain carpenter, but he was at least an honest man. It is well he died before seeing his Son make a fool of Himself like this."

And still another spoke: "If He is a prophet or a Messiah, why does He not work some wonderful miracle? I came hoping to see some new thing. My brother was at that wedding in Cana and he said there was something very strange about that wine, and I have heard many rumors; but Jesus is doing nothing but talk."

Now as the noise grew and the angry looks and words could no longer be ignored, Jesus said: "Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. Verily I say unto you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and

six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the Land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

At that the murmurs and mutterings, which had been going on for some time, swelled to an outburst of wrath. One man shouted, "So, we are not good enough for this carpenter Messiah to work miracles on!" And another took it up, "Put Him out! Let Him go to the heathen and to the Gentiles, if Jews are too mean for Him! He is a renegade, a blasphemer. Out with this ox-yoke Messiah!"

And as he spoke he leaped to his feet, and others with him, their faces distorted with anger. They crowded about Jesus, caught Him by the arms and shoulders, and dragged Him from the synagogue and along the street, out to the brow of the hill, intending to fling Him headlong over the precipice.

All this time Jesus looked on them with great, wondering eyes full of grief. He had come to His own, and they had rejected Him.

But as they neared the brow of the hill there came upon Him the consciousness that His work was not yet done. He must be about his Father's business. He aroused Himself to action, and the men who dragged Him stood amazed. They no longer dragged Him. He stood upright in their midst. Something of that strange majesty that upon a later occasion made the veteran police of Jerusalem fear to touch Him and caused them to go away saying, "Never man spake like this man," came over Him. He only looked at them, and they dropped back, ashamed and abashed, while Jesus retraced His steps through the town. He stopped for the last time to slake His thirst at the cool fountain where He drank as a boy. His disciples, alarmed and bewildered, knowing not what to do, had lagged behind the mob, but now joined Him, and with Him quietly walked down the mountain road and out of Nazareth forever.

Two hearts in Nazareth were infinitely sad that day. One was Mary's. Her hopes, nourished for over thirty years, that the great hour would come which would explain the song of the angels and the worship of the wise men at the birth of Jesus, had again been dashed to

the ground in disgraceful failure; she could only pray and ponder and wait. The other sad heart Jesus carried in His own breast. Oh, the loneliness of bidding farewell to all the loved scenes of His boyhood and youth! On that great rock precipice yonder He had found a raven's nest and gone home with happy face to tell His mother the joyful news. On that hillside He used to gather the first spring flowers. Up above the road a shepherd led his flock, and Jesus remembered when the gray-haired old shepherd had given Him a little lamb whose mother had died. He recalled how He had carried it home in His arms, for His own; and had made a bed for it on the shavings in the carpenter's shop, feeding it goat's milk from the family flock. A rollerbird flashed by, and its beauty brought the tears to His great eyes of love. But He did not hesitate. The Father called. His disciples were following Him. Childhood's days were over. The great work for which He was born was upon Him. He looked up into the clear blue of the Syrian sky and said in tender, faithful words of submission and trust: "Not my will, but thine be done."

The Feeding
of the
Five Thousand
and the
Night After

VI

The Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Night After

I



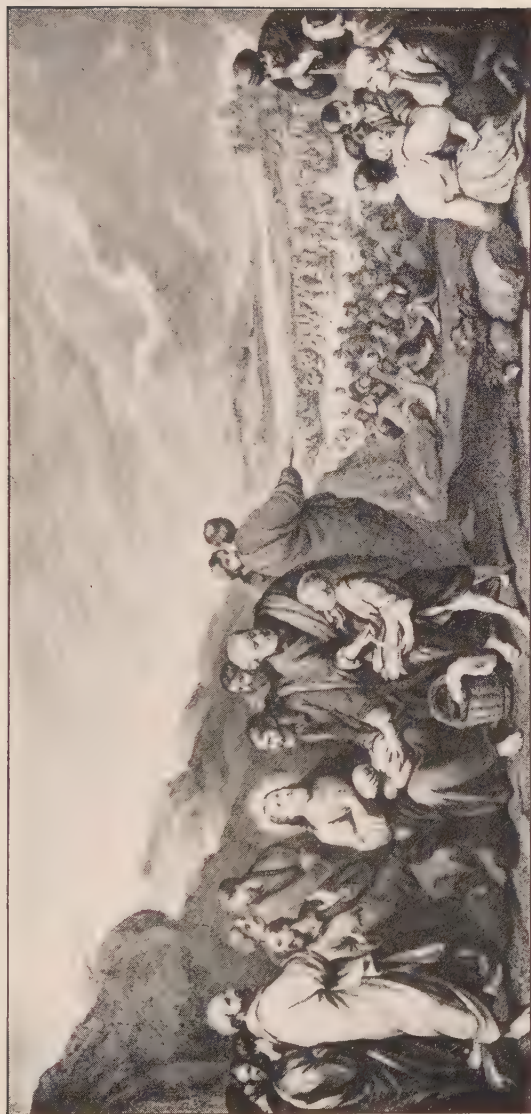
T WAS springtime in Palestine. From the hilltops down to the water's edge the whole world was green, with here and there bright colored flowers showing through. The air was full of balm, and the warmth of the sunshine beckoned to the country.

The Master's heart was sad. Only that morning He had been gladdened by the return of the disciples from their wide-spread mission of blessing in preaching the coming kingdom and healing the diseases of the people. They had come back amazed at their success and full of the story of how even the devils had been subject to them. But soon after their arrival the sad news had come of the murder of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, and Jesus had caught a

glimpse of the cross of sacrifice on which He was to suffer for our sins. A premonition of the awful agony of Gethsemane stirred His soul, and He longed for a day of communion with His close friends and disciples; so He said wistfully to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."

And so the Master bade them steer their little boat along the lake until they landed on the shore of the narrow plain of El Batihab, beyond the village of Bethsaida Julius, a wild, uninhabited valley nestling snugly between the green hills and the lake. With a sigh of relief Jesus, who loved to be near to nature, threw His strong body on the flower-sprinkled grass while His disciples grouped themselves about Him for a rare day of rapturous communion with their Lord.

But it was not to be. The whole land was talking about Jesus and His miracles of healing; also about His disciples, who had penetrated every part of the country, leaving behind them a trail of blessings in deeds of kindness and healing done in the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth. And so from every direction they came, by ones and twos, by whole families and village caravans, until in



Murillo, 1617-1682

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. *Matthew XIV, 19, 20.*

an hour or two the narrow plain of El Batihab was the most populous part of Palestine. Thousands of men, women, and children thronged from the foothills to the water's edge, all craving to see Jesus, to hear His words of wisdom, and multitudes hoping for His voice or hand in healing.

Blind men, lame men, lepers—slinking, afraid, about the outskirts—crippled children carried in mothers' arms, fever-stricken people brought by friends and longing with burning anguish for but a touch of His healing hand, were brought to Him with looks and words of appeal that wrung His great soul. Nor did they come in vain. His own weariness fell away from Him as He fed on this meat from heaven and went about His Father's work of service for humanity.

But this great unorganized multitude had brought no food, and as the sun sank in the western sky they were weary and faint with hunger. But when the disciples would have sent them away to towns and cities to buy food, Jesus, in gracious hospitality, said, "Do not send them away. Give ye them to eat."

"But," they reasoned with Him, "where could we find food enough to feed these thou-

sands, even if we had the money to pay for it?" Just then Andrew broke in with a word, saying that in all the crowd the only food he had seen was a little peddler lad with five small loaves of bread and two little fishes. He said it to Jesus, half laughing, to show Jesus that it was impossible to do what He had asked when that was all the food in the crowd. But the Master smiled into Andrew's eyes with a look that Andrew never forgot, and said, "Make the men sit down."

The disciples went forth to their task. They speedily organized that mob into an orderly army of fifties and hundreds of hoping, wondering, expectant people, until the thousands were reclining to be fed. Blind men who now could see as well as any, crippled children now healed and leaping for joy, many whose fevers had been cooled, and others whose ears, long deaf, now drank in the songs of birds and the laughter of little children—these and their friends did not doubt they would be fed. He who had healed them was equal to every need. All eyes were fastened on Jesus.

He had sent for the little huckster and his basket, with only five loaves and two fishes

left, happy to sell out the last of his store. Little did he dream that that day he was to join the immortals whom the world can never lose out of its memory or its heart.

And the ten thousand eyes—yea, more, for there were that many “besides women and children”—who had the most eager eyes of all—looked on as the Master gathered His disciples and friends to carry food to the crowd. Then above that little basket He lifted His outspread hands in blessing, and, His face turned toward heaven, prayed to God. Methinks I hear what the multitude bent forward to catch, but missed: “Oh Father, maker of heaven and earth, feed these thy fainting children. Multiply these loaves and fishes until every hungry man and woman and child is fed. Glorify Thy name this day.” And then with a smile of infinite love and triumph He began to break and hand to the disciples, and every man went forth, not with hands full, but with arms loaded down with bread and fish for the hungry multitude, until all were fed, and then they gathered up twelve baskets full of fragments, “that nothing be lost.”

The crowd as they ate, as their hunger was appeased, became ever more excited in their

minds, and on every side the disciples heard the cry, "Surely this is the Messiah," or, "This is he whom the prophets foretold." And some fiery, eager souls began to talk loudly of throwing off the hated Roman yoke. Jesus saw that if an insurrection broke out, His ministry would be ended. The crowd was too great for safe guidance. He bade the people now to return to their homes for the night, and asked His disciples to enter their boat and cross over to the other side while He sent the crowd away.

They did not wish to leave Him, but obeyed. And as the multitude began to scatter under the leadership of the falling night, which is the good shepherd that brings us all home, Jesus slipped away into the mountain for hours of secret communion with the Father.

II

It is in that darkest part of the night, just before dawn. A great wind storm has come up and the wind fairly howls and shrieks down the rugged cañons among the hills about the lake.

Jesus walks down the hillside beside the sea, now torn into waves white with foam from the

churning of the water under the pounding of the fierce gales. Far out across the mounting waves He sees the little boat still battling against the wind and almost swamped by the sea. He steps out boldly on the water and walks across the waves.

The disciples see Him coming, but they do not dare to believe that it is their Master coming to their aid. Instead, old forgotten superstitions from childhood come back, and Peter says: "It is a sign. We are to be drowned in the storm. It is Christ's ghost walking across the waves." And as all their hearts shrink at Peter's despairing words, the Master's comforting hail, in His own sweet, mellow tones, rings through the storm the message of good cheer, "It is I: be not afraid." And then Peter, impulsive Peter, always like the pendulum of a clock in his swing from one extreme to another, shouts back, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water."

"Come!" The voice of Jesus calls, and over the side of the boat ventures Peter, and on he goes with the water like solid pavement under his feet so long as his eyes are on Christ. Then suddenly the strange terror of the situation comes over him and, taking his eyes from

Christ, he looks on the storm-tossed sea and begins to sink. From the depths of his soul he cries, "Lord, save me!" Out springs the strong hand of the Master, and Peter is lifted over the side of the boat and they both stand in the midst of the disciples. And while they look into each other's faces, lo! the wind is gone, the vessel ceases to rock, the waves no longer roll, and the moon is mirrored in a pool of silver without a ripple to disturb its quiet bosom.

All is well with the disciples, for Jesus is with them.

The Devils
Loose at
Gadara



Rivière, 1840-1920

THE MIRACLE OF THE GADARENE SWINE

And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. *Mark V, 12-13.*

VII

The Devils Loose at Gadara

TWO THOUSAND HOGS DROWNED

(Specially reported for the Jerusalem Herald)



LAST week, I happened in Gadara on my way to Capernaum and found the whole countryside talking about a strange occurrence which happened a week ago last Wednesday.

It seems that for months a poor, demon-possessed wretch, one Jacob Wildman, has had his den like a wild beast in an old cave up in the graveyard back of Gadara. The people who live about the village are all agreed that the man was feared and dreaded by every man, woman, and child in the community. Several times the authorities have undertaken to put an end to the nuisance and have bound him with chains, but in every case he has broken the chains and escaped to his old haunts.

The swine-herders who look after large herds of hogs in this region have often listened to the man crying at night as tho in great anguish, and sometimes he has seemed to try to kill himself by cutting his flesh with sharp stones. For the most of the time he has gone about naked, a hairy, scarred creature, with a vicious temper that has made him feared as a very devil by all the neighborhood.

All the talk and gossip of Gadara these days hang about this Jacob Wildman; for he is here no more—neither are about two thousand hogs, and thereby hangs the story.

Some time ago the JERUSALEM HERALD had an account of a young Rabbi who had, it was reported, turned water into wine at a wedding at Cana, and who had held a remarkable mission at the Samaritan town of Sychar, but who, on attempting to speak in his own town of Nazareth where he had been known for years as an able carpenter, was roughly handled and came near being thrown over a precipice and killed.

This young Rabbi seems to have escaped, and, it is said, has wrought miracles and attracted vast crowds to his preaching throughout Galilee. A great many people claim that

he has healed them of disease; some say that they were blind but now see as well as any one; others that they were lepers but now are as well as ever. These stories are on every one's lips. He is accompanied by a class of pupils who go with him everywhere. These pupils are just ordinary working people; the leading spirit among them seems to be a man named Peter, a well-known fisherman whose home is in Capernaum.

According to accounts, this young carpenter, Rabbi Jesus, came across from Capernaum in a boat the other morning and landed at Gadara with his disciples. A storekeeper here at Gadara who saw him says that he had no sooner landed than Jacob Wildman came running, naked, past his store, his hair knotted and tangled, his eyes haggard, a horribly repulsive sight; and that he ran straight toward Jesus and his followers. The storekeeper, it seems, has a brother who had been cured by Jesus of a withered arm that he had not been able to use for years, and so he felt kindly disposed toward Jesus and wished to warn him of the dangerous character of Wildman, so shouted a warning as he pursued the crazy man. But, he says, when the naked man

came near to Jesus he stopped and fell down before Jesus as tho he were worshiping, and he cried out in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the village: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God. I adjure thee by God, torment me not!"

The storekeeper says that Jesus looked at the poor naked wretch with a face full of compassion and sympathy, but said in a voice of stern command: "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." And that then Jesus seemed to be talking to the spirit, tho he, the storekeeper, could see nothing of it. But Jesus said, "What is thy name?" and a voice replied, "My name is legion, for we are many. And we beg that you do not send us out of the country, but let us go and dwell in that herd of swine yonder on the mountain-side." To this Jesus consented. "Go," he said, "but trouble this man no further."

Levi, the storekeeper, says that he and every one else were amazed at the wonderful change that immediately came over Jacob Wildman. The mad look was gone from his eyes; but he was greatly chagrined and embarrassed because of his nakedness. Seeing this, Jesus took off his own coat and gave it

to the man, and Peter got a cloth out of the boat and tied it about his loins, and Levi went to his store and brought an old cloak and gave him, so that Jesus could have his own coat again. Very soon they had Wildman clothed, and Peter and John, two of the disciples of Jesus, helped to comb out the tangles in his hair, and he began to look like the decent, respectable man he had been years before. Levi says that Wildman kept his eyes on Jesus every moment, and they fairly beamed with gratitude; after a little while Jesus asked them all to retire and leave him with Wildman, and the two sat on the side of the boat in deep conversation for a long time, until a large group of swine-herders and a big swine-owner came noisily into town.

The Interview with the Swineherder

While I was talking with Levi about the wonderful destruction of swine following the casting out of the demons from Jacob Wildman, he suddenly looked through the open door into the street and said: "There goes the chief swine-herder for Julius, the Hog King of Gadara, now. He can tell you about the pigs much better than I."

In response to questions, the man grinned and said, "I guess I am the man you are after. I had charge of the finest herd of hogs Julius ever owned. We kept them right up there on that hillside and all was going quietly and the hogs were feeding as peacefully as you could wish to see, when suddenly the big boars and some of the old bell-sows seemed to go wild. It was just like a flash. One moment all quiet, and the next moment those old boars were all fighting, and the bell-sows ran pell mell down the hill toward the lake. You know it is very steep up above town and a real precipice at the lake side. Well, it was not a minute after the first fit of wildness until those old bell-sows were making straight for that high bluff. Some of the herders were thrown flat and cut terribly with the sharp feet of the hogs. Fortunately, I was up on a big rock and in no danger, and I saw it all. I called them, as did some of the other herders, but it was no use. You see, heavy and fat as they were, after they got started they couldn't stop; the hill was steep and those ahead were pushed right along. It wasn't as long as I have been telling it until I saw the hogs in the front tumbling right over that

bluff into deep water, and they kept at it, one wave of them after another, until two thousand as fine hogs as Gadara or Decapolis ever saw were drowned in that lake.

“What did you do then?”

“Well, sir, it was the meanest thing I ever had to do. I have been working for Julius for nigh on to twenty years—since I was a little chunk of a boy—and I have been his head man with the hogs now for nearly five years, and to go and tell Julius that I had let an entire herd of two thousand hogs drown themselves before my eyes was not a job to my liking.”

“Did you have at that time any idea of the cause?”

“Not in the least. I thought they had just gone crazy. I had a horse up at the camp, and I rode to the home ranch as quickly as I could and found Julius at breakfast. Of course, he was wild. Who wouldn't be? At first he could not believe it. He thought I must be joking him. But when he really got it into his head that I was telling the real facts, he jumped to his feet and said: ‘I have got to find out what caused it, so that I can save my other herds.’ So he got on to a horse

and rode as fast as he could for town to see what he could find out."

Just then a big burly Roman on a black stallion came riding down the street, and the swine-herder said: "There's Julius now. He can tell you what he found out better than I."

The Story of Julius the Hog King

I held up my hand and Julius reined in his horse as he drew near. When interrogated, the Hog King of Gadara squared himself around on his horse and remarked: "I have been growing hogs since I was a boy, and my father before me was a hog-raiser, and I never saw or heard anything like it before and I hope I never shall again.

"When I got the news of the loss of that big herd I rode into town as fast as my horse could run. I remember as I passed the graveyard I looked for Jake Wildman, whom I always dread to meet, this time fearing that he might scare my horse and throw me, I was riding so fast; but I need not have worried, for when I got into town, what should I see but Jake Wildman dressed up like any decent man and quietly sitting talking to the finest looking man I have ever seen. Yes, I must

say, even if he did cost me a fortune in those hogs, Jesus was the noblest specimen of man I ever set my eyes on.

"Levi came out of his store as I slowed my horse down to a walk, and I asked him, 'Levi, what has come over Wildman?' Levi was so excited he fairly stuttered. 'Why, Julius, the man is cured! That Rabbi Jesus, who has been healing so many people over at Capernaum, came over early this morning, and Wildman ran up to him as he landed. I was afraid he was going to attack the Rabbi, but Jesus commanded the devils to come out of him. And say, Julius, has anything happened to your hogs?'

"'Well I should say something has happened to them. That whole mountain herd is at the bottom of the lake!'

"'You don't say so! Well, Julius, I was afraid of it. For I heard the devils ask Jesus to let them go into the swine and Jesus said: 'Go!' and from that moment Jacob Wildman has been as sane and peaceful a man as I ever saw.'

"I saw one of my friends just then who had a herd of sheep and told him what had happened, and he said: 'Why it will be my sheep

next!' So we went around town gathering up other stockmen and all kinds of leading business men as we went, and finally went over to see Jesus. They appointed me spokesman. I bowed to Jesus, who looked at me with the calmest, clearest eyes I ever saw. I said: 'Teacher, we are a committee of the property owners of Gadara and the country round about, who have come to beseech you earnestly to go away from Gadara and leave us to ourselves.'

"Then Wildman spoke up and his face fairly shone: 'Why, Julius, don't ask him to leave! See what he has done for me. You know what a poor, demon-mad man I was, everybody hating me and afraid of me, and now my heart is full of love and kindness. There are other poor wretches who are still suffering along this coast. Don't ask him to leave.'

"But I said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a great prophet and can cast out devils, but my hogs are drowned, and we are all afraid to have you here. Please go away and do not come back.' And the sheep-owner said: 'Yes, Rabbi, we all want you to go.'

"Then Jesus rose and said to his disciples:

‘We will go to the people who believe, and who desire us.’

“As they got into the boat, Wildman caught Jesus by the arm, and with eyes full of tears said: ‘Oh, Teacher, let me go with you!’

“But Jesus smiled into his face and said: ‘Go to thy house, unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee.’ And to my astonishment Wildman bent over and pressed his lips to the hem of Jesus’ garment and said: ‘I will do as you say as long as I live.’ And in spite of his tears he smiled back into the face of Jesus.”

Jacob Wildman Home Again

Scouting an interesting human story I went on to Decapolis, where Wildman had formerly lived. Riding over the same road along which Wildman had gone on foot a few days before, I was astonished to find that people were still talking about him all along the way; and when I got near Decapolis, whenever I saw a group of a dozen people together I could be pretty sure they were talking about the wonderful cure of Jake Wild-

man and the strange story he told about it. So without difficulty I made my way to the humble little cottage where he lived with his wife and his little boy and girl. The place had run down; but I heard some one singing "The Lord is My Shepherd" before I reached the house, and found Wildman hard at work here and there patching up his house.

He stopped and looked up with a happy face when asked, "Is this Mr. Jacob Wildman?" "It is," he replied, and when encouraged to express his opinion about his cure for publication, replied joyfully. "There is nothing I like to talk about so well. You see, I was the slave of evil spirits so long and lived in such misery and wretchedness that I can scarcely keep from laughing and shouting all the time now that I am free. Say, do you know Jesus?" he interrupted himself to ask. "Oh, man! There is the one to see. Blessed be His name. He cast out the devils by His word and made a man of me again."

And do they still give you any trouble?

"Yes," he replied, "Sometimes I am tempted to do evil; but I pray to God and then the evil spirit departs and the temptation passes away. Jesus told me He would never

leave me nor forsake me if I would be faithful, and by His help I am safe."

Upon the entrance of Mrs. Wildman, the released man fervently said, "May God forgive me for all I made her suffer in the days of my wickedness."

But the good wife protested, "Don't ever speak of it again. It was the evil spirits that made you their slave and that caused you to do it, but now that Jesus has set you free from them I have the best husband in all the land."

Her eyes filled with happy tears and she really looked as tho she believed what she said. As I was ready to leave, the children came in, and clung about Wildman's legs as he worked, as tho they feared he would go away again. "Oh," said Mrs. Wildman, "it's a hard time we have had; but, thank God, it is all over now. Jesus has left a happy family behind Him." And then she burst out with what will be interesting news to Decapolis: "Yes, and my husband says that Jesus told him He was coming soon to Decapolis to preach and heal. Jacob is fixing us up comfortably so that he can go out into all these ten towns and tell the people what Jesus has

done for him, so that when He comes to preach the people will be ready to welcome Him; and when He comes I am going to take the children to see Him who so blessed their father, and I will be able to thank and bless Him whom, not having seen, I love with all my heart."

The
Transfiguration
and the
Morning
After



Raphael. 1483-1520

THE TRANSFIGURATION

And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. *Luke IX, 29-31.*

VIII

The Transfiguration and the Morning After

I



FOR MANY days, as Jesus and His disciples journeyed toward Northern Palestine, the snow-white summit of Mount Hermon must often have attracted their gaze and appealed to their minds, not only on account of its beauty but as a challenge to their strength. To Jesus it had an appeal as an appropriate spot to keep His tryst with Moses and Elijah in preparation for His death. What more ideal place than Mount Hermon with its snow-capped glory to meet two such mountain climbers as Moses and Elijah? Moses had led his flocks for forty years on the slopes of Mount Horeb, and for forty days he had lived on Mount Sinai to receive the law for man from the hand of God. And when it came his time to die, God led him to the summit of Mount Abarim to view the promised land he

was never to enter, and from Pisgah's top God Himself had pointed out to him the beauties of the land his people were to possess.

Elijah also was a mountaineer. It was on Mount Carmel that he won his splendid victory over the priests of Baal, and on Mount Horeb he found his God-given refuge from the wrath of Jezebel. And so, to the clear eye of Jesus, yonder on some promontory of Mount Hermon was the appropriate setting for a conference with these mountain men of the earlier day to talk over the tragic and glorious days to come.

As on many other special occasions, He left nine of the twelve and whoever else were with them at the foot of the mountain, and taking Peter, James, and John, He ascended the sloping side of Mount Hermon.

In the evening they made camp on some pleasant spot the Master's eye had decided upon, and no doubt after the evening meal had been eaten and they had feasted their eyes on the wonderful views open to them from that lofty mountain camp, the Master turned from the communion with His friends and disciples to talk with His Father.

Weary with the exertions of the day, the

disciples had fallen asleep, but as Jesus prayed, no doubt kneeling as He was often accustomed to do, He was transfigured: His countenance beamed with a holy light, His very clothes became radiant with a glory which illuminated the place where they were, and into the midst of that glorious illumination two visitors came—Moses, whose tomb God Himself had sealed at the foot of Mount Abarim in the land of Moab, and Elijah, who had ascended to heaven from beside the Jordan in a chariot of fire. What a scene! There in the center is Jesus, the Wonder Man of the ages; on one side is Moses, the man selected to receive in “God’s handwriting” the Ten Commandments, the foundation of all human law; and on the other side Elijah, God’s prophet, who had dared Ahab in his palace, had triumphed over Baal, and had earned his chariot of fire to the skies.

These giants of the law and the prophets are here to talk with Jesus.

At just this time the glorious light shining from the person of Jesus arouses the sleeping disciples. As they gaze upon the glory of their Leader, they listen; and by degrees they learn the personality of Moses and Elijah,

and that they are talking of the death Jesus is to die on the cross at Jerusalem.

It was but natural for men like Moses and Elijah to talk to Jesus about death, not as something to suffer, but as a great achievement to be accomplished. These patriarchs had met death face to face and had come off victorious.

As the disciples listened, the daring, impulsive soul of Peter caught fire with enthusiasm, not comprehending the great glory of the coming tragedy of the cross on Calvary about which Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus, only knowing that he was happy in the brightness of the glory issuing from his Master, inspired by the splendid company of these great souls, the big, boyish, lovable fellow, a great bundle of joyful feelings, burst forth in exclamation to Jesus: "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Jesus might have smiled at Peter's idea of building three log cabins on Mount Hermon to house three such citizens of the universe as Moses and Elijah and Himself, with the cross, the axle on which all human history was

to turn, looming yonder on Mount Calvary; but Peter's emotional outburst was forgotten in the fact that even as he spoke the light that had shone forth from the person of Christ faded, and a strange cloud caused the disciples to fear as it overshadowed them and shut them in. And out of the darkness came a voice saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen: hear ye Him."

And when the cloud passed, Moses and Elijah had taken their departure and Jesus was there alone before them.

The three disciples were so awed with the strange mystery and glory they had witnessed that they dared not move or speak until Jesus came to them and said gently, "Arise, and be not afraid."

II

In the early morning, after that wonderful transfiguration, Jesus, with Peter, James and John, descended the side of Hermon to the valley, where they found the other disciples in great perplexity and trouble.

When Jesus, with the three who had been with Him on Mount Hermon, came upon their comrades they found them beset by

scribes who were making them miserable with insulting questions. Suddenly some one in the group saw Jesus and shouted aloud, "The Master is here!" Then out of the crowd a man came running in great excitement and threw himself on his knees at the feet of Jesus and cried aloud in the anguish of a broken heart: "Teacher, I beseech thee to look upon my son; for he is mine only child; and behold a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth, and it hardly departeth from him, bruising him sorely. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not."

There stand the nine disciples who have so rejoiced to Him that even the devils were subject to them, with hanging heads and blushing faces. Jesus looks from the father, kneeling at His feet, to the sneering scribes and the shamed, perplexed disciples and says, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and bear with you?" And then looking with patient tenderness into the face of the grief-stricken father He says gently, "Bring hither thy son."

The father, hope springing up again in his almost despairing heart, hastens to obey; but

even as he leads his boy to Jesus the evil spirit dashes him to the ground, where he grovels in horrid convulsions, and rolls with foaming lips. "How long has he been so afflicted?" asks Jesus. "From childhood," answers the father, "and often it hath flung him both into the fire and the water to destroy him; but if at all thou canst, take pity on us and help us."

Jesus gazes on the father with a look that penetrates him to the soul and repeats the father's own words, "If thou canst?" and after a moment's pause continues, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

I can see that father as he lifts, not only his face full of agony, but his hands outstretched to Christ and cries a sentence that has been repeated perhaps as often as any other sentence in the Bible: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!"

Then as the crowd draw close to catch every word and see every act of Christ, He looks upon the poor boy, commanding, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."

Then, with a fearful cry that rings on the air, a yet more terrible convulsion follows and the boy lies still. Many in the crowd cry, "He

is dead!" But Jesus takes the boy by the hand, and amid the shouts and wonder of the crowd restores him to his father in health and peace.

"Why could not we cast it out?" ask His puzzled disciples.

"Because of your little faith," answers Jesus.

Martha's
Story
of the
Raising of
Lazarus

IX

Martha's Story of the Raising of Lazarus



ANY PREACHER who has been pastor of a large congregation of Christian people feels acquainted with Martha of Bethany, the sister of Mary and Lazarus. For my part I would not know how to carry forward a church without her. She is invaluable in the work of the Ladies' Aid. She is often needed in the missionary societies, and at times she does great service as assistant superintendent or even herself chief of the Sunday School. I see no particular advantage in making comparison between her and her sister Mary. My observation is that often Mary would be fully as much improved by a little of Martha's pep as Martha is in need of some of Mary's disposition to meditation and spiritual communion.

It must be admitted that Martha usually has a healthy opinion of her own ability to make good, and the best thing about her is

that she is usually able to deliver the goods. She is a snappy, live, substantial woman who is always able to give her own reason for whatever hope there is in her.

When I began to study the question of a proper angle from which to approach the story of the raising of Lazarus, it occurred to me that Martha was really the most interesting human being to tell the story.

Having come to that conclusion, there was only one thing in reason for me to do, and that was to go to the kitchen door and humbly beg Martha to come into the library and tell me her own story of the most dramatic and wonderful of all the miracles of Jesus. There is one thing you have to give Martha credit for: she is always ready to talk. She came right in without any apologies—tho she did say that she ought to finish washing her breakfast dishes, but that I would have to take her as she was—and came with her sleeves rolled above her elbows, with her long dish-apron, the badge of the Order of Martha, still in place.

She began by saying defiantly, "It's a wonder you did not ask my sister Mary to tell this story. For nearly two thousand years

they have been running me down and praising her as if she were a better friend to Jesus than I."

"Martha," I replied, "I can say from the bottom of my heart that I have never doubted that your love for the Lord was as tender and loyal as Mary's."

The good woman's face beamed like a sunrise as she jumped up, and said, "I am going to shake hands with you for that," and she squeezed my hand in her vigorous grip until it hurt. Then she went on, "There have been mighty few preachers who have had sense enough to know that. I have been so disgusted ten thousand times at the way that I have been misjudged. The idea that a woman can not love because she knows how to roast meat properly, or to make an appetizing soup, or a pie that melts in your mouth! I loved my sister Mary, no sister ever loved a sister more dearly. But I don't believe Jesus would have come to our house in Bethany half as often as He did if she had had to do the cooking."

Started on this theme Martha did not know when to stop. Her eyes flashed and sparkled: "We all loved Jesus. Lazarus loved Him more devotedly than I ever saw one brother

love another. Jesus also loved Lazarus, and it did my heart good to see them together. Often Jesus, who was a larger man than my brother, would have His arm around the shoulder of Lazarus and talk to him about what a wonderful world it would be when sin was done away with and the people loved God and each other."

"But, Martha, did not Mary sometimes help you with the housework?"

"Oh, yes, when we were at home alone, Mary was very good help, and she had the sweetest disposition you ever saw; but when Jesus came she said goodby to the kitchen, and she so loved to hear Him talk that I did not often disturb her. One time, tho, I was a good deal flustered because a lot of other company were coming in to see Jesus that night, and I went right into the living-room, and I suppose my face was red and showed I was flurried, and said: 'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me!' You ought to have seen the tender smile Jesus gave me then. It took all the sting out of His words and made me feel that He really appreciated me and loved me while He answered,

‘Oh, Martha, Martha! Thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’ I went back to work, comforted by the look He gave me when He said it, but not quite sure I understood all He meant. After a little, Mary came out and helped me very sweetly. But that night a great friend of ours, Joanra, the wife of Chuza, was there, and my sister Mary felt so set up over what Jesus had said about her that she told Joanna, who was a great friend of Doctor Luke, and could not keep anything she knew from him, and so it got into print in Luke’s Gospel. I don’t believe Joanna would like to have had all the fretful things she said when she was flustered with company coming and pies in the oven, put in the Bible, either. One thing I am sure about: If the preachers who have been using me as a warning to their women all these years could have seen the sweet look on Jesus’ face as He said those words, they would know that their sermons went wide of the mark a good many times.

“I was always anxious about my cooking when Jesus came, because I loved Him so

dearly; but I guess there never was a man who cared less what he ate. He always seemed to be thinking about other things."

I saw that if Martha got switched off on to cooking and eating again we never would get to the great experience of Lazarus, so I broke in on her talking, interesting as it was.

"But, Martha, please tell me about Lazarus and his coming back to life again. Were you not really expecting that Jesus would return and heal him before he died?"

"Indeed we were. None of us supposed He would allow Lazarus to die. Why, He had healed a great many sick people among our friends and we thought He would surely come in time to save Lazarus, who was much the closest friend He had anywhere about Jerusalem. Just as soon as he became seriously sick we sent a messenger to tell Jesus, and we thought He would come, up to the very last. And when Lazarus died, our hearts were broken."

"But, Martha, did you not think Jesus was able to raise him from the dead?"

"Oh, I suppose I thought He was able, yet I did not think He would. I had heard about the widow's son at Nain, but he had not been



Rubens. 1577-1640

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. *John XI, 43, 44.*

buried; and when we finally had to lay Lazarus away in the family vault and shut down the stone over his poor, cold body, I never expected to see him again in this world."

"Tell me how you felt when some one came and told you Jesus was in Bethany?" I asked.

"Oh, I felt I just had to get to Him and tell Him how awfully disappointed I was that He had not come sooner. So I ran out on the road to meet Him and His disciples, and He was so kind and tender in His sympathy that it hurt worse than ever that He had not come in time to cure my brother, and I just burst into tears and cried: 'O Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!' and then I said something I had never thought of saying before, but just seeing the wonderful face of Jesus again had given me a strange new uplift of hope, and I said: 'And even now I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.' Still my heart did not grasp His meaning when He said so kindly: 'Thy brother shall rise again.' I thought He meant the final resurrection at the last day, and I said so.

"Then Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, tho he

die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?

“O man, you ought to have seen the face of Jesus then! There was a majesty and glory in His face that I had never seen before. Before that I had thought of Him as my dear friend, and the friend of my brother and sister. We had all loved Him better than we did any one else. I knew He was good and holy, and had great wisdom and power with God; but now something in His face made me want to fall down and worship Him as God. And I cried, ‘Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world.’

“Then I ran to the house after Mary and tried to get her away alone, but a lot of our friends were there, and, thinking we were going to the grave, came with us. When we drew near Jesus, Mary ran on ahead and threw herself down at His feet and cried like her heart would break and said just as I had, ‘Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.’

“Jesus looked down on her as she lay there at His feet, crying her heart out, and groaned

as if in great anguish. Then He said very tenderly and softly, 'Where have ye laid him?'

"I said, 'Lord, come and see.' And as we walked along together, side by side, Jesus wept. I heard some friends, who were walking immediately behind me, talking, and one said in a low voice, 'Behold how He loved him!' And the other answered, 'Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?' And I felt again a stab of pain go through my heart that Jesus had come too late to save my precious brother's life.

"Just then we came to the grave, a cave with the great stone closing the door, and Jesus immediately said, 'Take ye away the stone.' At that I was terribly embarrassed. I felt it would never do and that we would all be shamed by the stench from the decaying body. So I touched Jesus on the arm gently and said, protestingly, 'Lord, by this time the body decayeth and the odor will be nauseating, for he hath been dead four days!'

"Then Jesus looked down into my face, for He was a head taller than I, and with a wonderful smile said, 'Said I not unto thee that if

thou believest, thou shouldst see the glory of God?’

“Then, not knowing what to think, but sure that Jesus knew what He was doing, and that all would be well, I asked some of the men to take away the stone. I did not know what was coming, but all my worry and fears were gone, and on Mary’s face I saw a look of rapt and wondrous hope.

“Then Jesus lifted His face toward the sky and prayed: ‘Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the multitude that stand around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.’

“And then with a voice such as I never heard Jesus use in speaking at any other time, for it roused me like a trumpet, Jesus said, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ And at that voice my brother that we had laid away with broken hearts to wait until the day of judgment, suddenly sat up and then arose and came out bound hand and foot in his grave clothes; and his face was bound with a napkin.

“Jesus said, ‘Loose him and let him go.’

“Oh, what an hour that was! Jesus and Lazarus were first in each other’s arms, and

Lazarus said: 'I thought you would come!' And Mary and I embraced our brother again and again. All the people who had known and loved Jesus before, among them our dear friend Simon who had been but recently healed of leprosy by Jesus, now crowded about and expressed their happiness and congratulations, and reverently assured the Lord of their wondering devotion.

"A great many of our friends who had come to mourn with us now remained to rejoice and also became believers in Jesus as the Christ. But strange to say, some of them were mean enough to go away, not only to plot against the Lord, but to plot also the death of Lazarus. Jesus they hounded to His death on the cross, but Lazarus remained with us for thirty years."

Simon's
Story
of the
Two Dinners
He Gave
to Jesus

X

Simon's Story of the Two Dinners He Gave to Jesus

I

The First Dinner



LIKE many students and lovers of the Bible I have had my hours of perplexity and mental confusion about the seemingly conflicting stories concerning the time or times when Jesus was the guest in the house of a certain Simon who was a rich householder of prominence in the town of Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem.

Luke calls him a Pharisee and says nothing about his health, but says that he gave a dinner to Jesus very early in His ministry.

Matthew and Mark call him Simon the leper, and tell the story of a dinner at the very last of Christ's ministry in Simon's house, at which Martha had charge and Lazarus and Mary were guests.

So great has been the perplexity on the subject that Christian artists have mixed up Mary of Magdala with one of these dinners, and pious Christian ministers have slandered Mary of Bethany in connection with the other.

I was sitting in deep soul communion over it all, not long ago, until I cried aloud to my own heart: "Oh, dear, I wish I could have an hour with this elusive Mr. Simon who is a Pharisee in high society one year, and two years later is still giving social entertainments but is called Simon the leper. I would soon get at the secret of this maze."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when something within me said (albeit I heard no voice), "It ought not to be so hard to get at the truth of the matter. Play, as children do, that Mr. Simon is sitting there in that chair opposite you and cross-examine him, making sure that he keeps within the Scriptural record, and let him unravel his own puzzle."

I have not been a boy for quite a while, but I have not lost the art of childhood; so I squared myself about and said: "Now Mr. Simon, will you please tell me how you

came to have Jesus at your house at dinner the first time?"

"Well, it happened this way," he answered. "I was a well-to-do bachelor, living in the largest house in Bethany, when Jesus first came preaching in Judea. My father, who in his lifetime was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, had given me the best education possible at that time, and had instilled into me the truth that the greatest interest in living was to be found in contact with great men. So I had formed the habit of inviting to my home as guests any distinguished visitors who came to Jerusalem. My wealth and established position made this possible and furnished me a vast amount of interest, and, not infrequently, amusement.

"So, when Jesus came to Jerusalem and by His miracles and His teaching attracted a great deal of attention, it was quite natural for me to invite Him to dinner at my house, and invite a number of prominent men to meet Him. A number of these men were, like myself, well-known Pharisees.

"I had seen Jesus and had listened to one of His addresses, and regarded Him as a brilliant man. His face was one that at once

awakened confidence in His goodness. Some of my friends, among them Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, had witnessed some of His miracles and I think even then hoped He was the Messiah, but my interest at that time was not so serious.

“While the dinner was in progress, a very unusual thing happened. A woman, altogether too well known in the town, came in and took her stand immediately behind the couch on which Jesus reclined. She seemed very much excited by deep feeling and as she stood behind the head of Jesus, my first thought was to have the servants remove her; but her presence at such a place and such a time was so odd that I waited, rather amused at the contrast between this young Rabbi and a woman of the streets. And while I waited she revealed the reason for her coming. Taking from a bag that she carried on her arm a very expensive cruse of alabaster, she looked longingly at the head of Jesus, whose hair was very beautiful, long and curling, after the custom of the time, and then, seeming to feel that this was more than she dared, she broke the seal and with eyes full of tears and a look of infinite affection went to His feet and,



Hofmann. 1824-1902

MARY ANOINTING THE FEET OF JESUS

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.
John XII, 3.

kneeling down at the foot of the couch, took the feet of Jesus, one at a time, brushed off the dust with her handkerchief, and poured the rare perfumed ointment on His feet, and with her hand she caressed them and rubbed them. Suddenly she burst into sobs, wetting His feet with a rain of tears; and when her handkerchief would not avail, she unloosed her long hair and wiped His feet with her own beautiful locks, for she was a woman who had been famous for her beauty.

"While this was going on there had been a good deal of suppressed disgust in my own mind, and in the minds of many of my guests, at the way in which Jesus received her attention. He did not seem to be disturbed at all, but rather to be pleased with her.

"I said in my mind, 'Nicodemus is surely mistaken if he thinks this man a prophet, for if He were a prophet He would know the kind of woman she is and would drive her away.'

"But, tho I had spoken nothing of these thoughts, Jesus showed that He knew exactly what I was thinking, for He Himself broke the embarrassing silence by saying, 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee?' To which I replied, 'Teacher, say on.'

“Then Jesus said: ‘A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. When they had not the wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?’ Of course, there was only one answer to that and I replied, ‘He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most.’ To which He agreed, ‘Thou hast rightly judged.’ And raising Himself on the couch so that He could look at the woman who was fondling His feet, wiping them with her hair, and every now and then bending to kiss them, He continued, ‘Seest thou this woman?’ As if we had not been looking at her ever since she came in! But He went on, ‘I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet; but she hath wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.’

“Then Jesus said to the woman, who had

been listening with a most wonderful look of interest and hope on her face: 'Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.'

"She looked for a moment as if she were going to speak, but only smiled and convulsively hugged His feet against her breast for a moment, giving them one loving farewell kiss, and with a wonderful obeisance in which her face flamed with grateful love, she turned and went out into the street.

"The Pharisees among my guests were greatly disturbed and said to one another: 'Who is this that even forgiveth sins?'

"But as Jesus was my guest, I changed the subject; and there was no further discussion at that time."

II

Simon's Leprosy

As Mr. Simon paused I burst out with the question I had been wanting to ask him for fifty years. "Please tell me, Mr. Simon, tell me how it comes that both Matthew and Mark call you 'Simon the Leper'?"

"That is a story," replied Mr. Simon, "that is both sorrowful and joyous. Sorrowful, be-

cause it recalls one of the most humiliating experiences any man has ever undergone, and joyous because it was God's way of bringing me to really know Jesus in the forgiveness of my sins.

"Shortly after the dinner, the story of which I have just told, like a flash of lightning out of a clear sky I became conscious that in some utterly unexplained way, unexplained even until now, I had contracted that living death, the disease of leprosy. There are no words to describe the horrors of that discovery. But when I was sure of the desperate fact I determined that I would make the best of it, and leaving my house in the care of trusted servants I went with one faithful man and his wife, who were born in my father's family and who were devoted to me, to a wild, picturesque forest on the southern slope of Mount Hermon, and pitched my tent where I could look out on the beauties of the world which I could no longer disturb and which from that lofty mountain camp could not disturb me. Every day my servants brought me food and left it in a convenient place, receiving my orders for the morrow. I lived this hermit life for nearly two years, when one day

I saw four men ascending Mount Hermon. Travelers did not often come so near in their ascent of the mountain, and I hid myself to watch as they drew near. As they approached I recognized the leader as Jesus, who had been my guest; and the sight of Him in that place stirred me to the depths. I suddenly remembered hearing Nicodemus tell me on one occasion that he had himself conversed with a man whom Jesus had cured of leprosy, and that Nicodemus believed that it was an honest case of healing. During these long, lonely months in the mountain camp I had often wondered if I had not misjudged Jesus at that dinner, and wished that I might see Him again and ask Him if He could heal me. And now here He was, seemingly coming directly to my camp. But before they quite reached me, they veered a little to the left, and as I was debating in my mind what to do, and trying to gather courage to follow them and discover myself to Jesus, they stopped, and Jesus, evidently excusing Himself to the others, came directly through the sparse woods to where I was waiting.

“When He came into my presence He expressed no surprize, but smiled as tho we had

met only yesterday, saying, 'Simon, would you like to go back home?'

"I replied, 'Teacher, do not mock me. I have been a poor leper for more than a year; you know I can not return home.'

"His dear smile only deepened and His look became more tender as He said: 'Simon, all things are possible if you only believe.'

"'O Teacher,' I cried, my heart in my throat, 'I have a confession to make. When in my house you were pleased at the attentions of that sinful woman, my heart was hard and critical of you, but since then I have learned much in the hard school of sorrow and suffering and I have longed for a kinder heart and a more loving spirit. You forgave the sins of that repenting woman,' and just then, impulsively, I dropped on my knees at His feet and cried: 'Lord, forgive my sins also.'

"Oh, the look of love in the face of Jesus then! After a moment He said: 'Simon, the leper's camp has been to you the very gate of heaven. Go home to Bethany clean, both in body and soul. Tell no one save Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and say to those dear

friends that I will see them again soon. Go in peace.'

"He turned and went back to His disciples. After Christ's resurrection from the dead Peter told me that at that time they were on their way to the place where the Lord was transfigured before them."

III

The Second Dinner

There was silence for a moment, and then fearing that Mr. Simon would elude me and escape, I took up my questioning again.

"And how about the second dinner?"

"Well, when Jesus left me alone near my camp on Mount Hermon, I was in such raptures over my forgiveness and a new consciousness of love for God and for Jesus that I did not for a few moments think about the healing of my body. Then it suddenly came over me that Jesus had told me to go back to Bethany 'clean in body and soul.' I looked down at my hands and arms, and the white dry scales were all gone; my flesh was as fresh and soft and moist as when I was a youth. When it really penetrated my soul that I was

clean, that my leprosy was gone, I leaped and shouted thanks to God, and ran back to my camp by the great mountain spring where I had lived for more than a year and, taking down the huge ram's horn with which I called my servants, blew a blast that made the old mountain ring and echo and that brought them anxiously wondering what was the matter. I ran to meet them and shouted: 'I have seen Jesus! Jesus has been here! He has forgiven my sins! He has healed me. I am a leper no more! We are going home to Bethany!'

"At first they thought I must be crazy, but when they found my leprosy was gone and I really was cured, they too went wild with joy and we broke camp that very evening and began our journey home.

"It was hard for my friends, especially the priest and my physician, to believe that I was really healed, but after they had thoroughly examined me they had to admit that there was no sign of leprosy on me.

"I went to see Martha and Mary and Lazarus and told them of my cure and gave them the message of Jesus. They cried over me and rejoiced with me. That night when we

talked together about Jesus and our love for Him, and some other neighbors who also loved Him came in, was the happiest I had ever spent. I told them of my first dinner to Jesus and of the sinful woman who had washed His feet with her tears, and I remember Mary was greatly moved and said, 'But for the mercy of God I, too, might have been a sinner like that.'

"Not long after, Jesus came to visit His friends in Bethany and I begged them to let me give another dinner to Jesus, and I asked Martha to take charge of the serving as tho it were her own house. With what different feelings I approached that dinner, which was really a supper, for it was in the evening to meet the convenience of the Master. I invited not only Jesus but all of His disciples. Jesus, of course, was given the place of honor, and into the midst of that dinner came Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. She came in smiling and happy, for she was known and honored by all who were present. She, too, had a splendid cruse of ointment, and, standing at Jesus' head as He reclined, like that other woman nearly three years before, she broke the seal and let the delicate perfume fill

the house while she anointed the head of the Lord. Then still smiling and happy she knelt at His feet and took His dear feet in her hands, and tho I had been careful that there had been every convenience for the Master and His disciples, she anointed His feet with the precious nard and let down her own beautiful hair that was like spun silk and wiped His feet with her ringlets of gold.

“I heard a disturbance among the disciples, and on turning to see what it was, Judas burst out in angry words, ‘It is a shame to have such waste as that. That rich nard should have been sold for three hundred pence and the money given to the poor.’

“It was a most embarrassing occurrence, and poor Mary, who had been so happy, looked up in alarm as tho she were going to cry; but Jesus changed it all as He said with a loving smile that drove all fear out of Mary’s face; ‘Why do you trouble her? She hath wrought a good work, for ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she poured this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also

which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.' All our faces grew tender and sad at His words, for in our hearts we felt them to be words of farewell from one we loved with a love beyond all words."

Christ's
Entry
Into
Jerusalem



Done 1833 1833

ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

...and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, ... the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen: Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. *Luke XIX, 35-38.*

XI

Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem



THE MOST important triumphal entry by a conquering hero into any city through the long ages of history was the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, nineteen hundred years ago. The entry into Rome by Cæsar at the head of one of his great triumphal processions when captive kings and queens marched bareheaded and barefooted in humiliation, chained to his chariot wheels, was a small and insignificant affair compared to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, riding a colt, the foal of an ass, so small that it barely kept His feet from dragging on the ground.

The saddle was made of the coats of Peter and John, and Peter led the docile beast by the bridle. At this time of the Paschal feast Jesus was the central figure and by far the most interesting personality in the nation. Such multitudes of sick people had been healed by Him and by His disciples that they

alone with their grateful friends were enough to spread abroad a vast amount of popular interest in Christ. So, on that Palm Sunday so long ago, not only were great crowds of the common people, who always heard Jesus gladly, gathered about Him, but many of His enemies, Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes, joined by a common hatred, were sprinkled through the multitude watching every act of the Master. At the Master's word, Peter started off toward the city, leading the ass's colt, unused to being guided by the bit. At the very start a divine enthusiasm took possession of the crowd. There had been no organized procession; but a welcome surpassing all organization, born of the love and gratitude of men and women and children whom Jesus had blessed, broke forth spontaneously and took possession of the occasion. Old Bartimæus, who had followed Jesus all the way from Jericho, threw off his cloak and running ahead flung his garment down in front of Jesus as He rode on, exclaiming, "Hosanna! Hosanna! to the Son of David! I was a poor blind beggar and He had mercy on me. He opened my eyes and gave me my sight!"

There were those there who could not resist

a summons like that. Mary Magdalene ran ahead and threw her cloak in the path and shouted, "I was in the grasp of evil demons and He set me free. Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" And Lazarus, a lithe fine-looking young man, full of strength and virile power, with his face flushed with grateful and reverent love, flung his splendid coat down for the feet of the ass and, with eyes filled with tears and voice trembling with emotion, cried, "I was dead and buried, and He brought me back to life. Hosanna to the Messiah! My Savior! My Lord!"

The effect of these shouts and testimonies was electric. Men, women, and children responded in wild but grateful and holy enthusiasm. Lepers whom He had cleansed, people whose lame limbs He had healed, palsied and epileptics whom He had cured, dumb children to whom He had given speech, suddenly found courage to show their love and gratitude, and when there were no longer coats or garments to carpet His way, they broke branches from overhanging trees and waved them and shouted and sang His praises and heralded His path into the holy city.

And then suddenly a wonderful thing hap-

pened. They had come to a point that uncovered the proud city in that day of its glory. One look did Jesus give to that glorious panorama and then with bursting heart the tears rained down His cheeks. His face was convulsed with agony and grief, and lifting His hands He cried aloud until they heard Him to the outer limits of the great throng; "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

The tumult and shouting had ceased as Jesus had spoken, but He signaled again to Peter to lead on, and soon they met a crowd coming out from Jerusalem to meet Him, and the shouting of His praises were louder than ever.

The Pharisees were alarmed at this popular applause, and in order to silence it one of them cunningly said to Jesus, "Master, rebuke

thy disciples." But the plotter blushed when Jesus looked him in the eye, answering, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

The
Repartee
of Jesus

XII

The Repartee of Jesus



IT WAS Christ's last Tuesday in the Temple. All sorts of combinations were being formed among the enemies of Jesus in order to tempt Him to do some unwise thing or say some foolish word that would either diminish His popularity with the people on the one hand or get Him into trouble with the Roman government on the other.

It was this common hatred that brought together the Herodians and the Pharisees to make common cause to entangle Jesus in His speech. Ordinarily an aristocratic Pharisee had about as much use for a Herodian as a self-respecting, high-toned dog has for an alley cat; but they combined in their efforts to destroy Jesus.

A shrewd old Pharisee said to the Herodians: "Can you suggest any question that, no matter how He answers it, He will find Himself in trouble?" A courtly Herodian

lawyer answered: "Why not ask Him about taxation by the Romans? There is nothing will wake these Roman governors to action so quickly as any attempt to interfere with the collection of taxes. Ask Jesus whether He favors paying taxes to Cæsar. If He says 'Yes,' the people will not like it; and if He says 'No,' the government will arrest Him."

"Good," said the Pharisee. "That is just the thing." So they set their evil heads together and formulated their question. A committee was then appointed to appear before Jesus, and in the most ingratiating and deceptive manner to put the matter up to Him for answer. They then sent out runners everywhere about in order to gather a great crowd and make as much publicity out of the test as possible.

When the crowd was pretty well assembled and had gathered around listening to Jesus, an impressive committee pushed their way through and with much deference and many apologies begged to be heard about a very important question. "Rabbi," the spokesman said, with most flattering humility, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any



Titian, 1477-1576

TRIBUTE TO CÆSAR

But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Shew Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's. And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's. *Luke XX, 23-25.*

man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?"

Every eye was on the face of Jesus. The crowd was thrilled with the zest of conflict and tense with excitement. Here and there the enemies of Jesus nudged and winked at each other. Their cunning eyes said, "We've got him now!" But Jesus gazed at them a moment and then, with a flash of comprehending indignation in His eyes, said, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money."

Disappointment was written on many faces in that crowd. Every enemy who was in the plot said in his heart: "He sees through us. How can we catch a man like that?"

No one had a piece of the hated money. No Jew would carry around money with Cæsar's face on it if he could help it; so a member of the committee hurried out into the money-changer's room and brought back a Roman denarius and handed it to Jesus. All was excitement again. Every eye was on Christ. Every ear was bent forward to catch His words.

The Master took the piece of money and,

looking on one side, saw the strong face of Tiberius, the Emperor; on the other, his title, Pontifex Maximus.

"Whose image and superscription is this?" Jesus asked calmly.

"Cæsar's," responded the leader of the committee.

Passing back the coin Jesus then replied with a smile, "Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Like whipped curs the committee slunk away, and the friends of Jesus looked into each other's faces with slow appreciation of the ease and skill with which He had confounded His enemies.

But the failure of the tax combination, tho utterly routing and humiliating, did not entirely discourage the enemies of Christ. In some way they must catch Him in His speech. And so after a little, a new committee came back with a question as stale even then as "Who was Cain's wife?" is now. And they asked Him to rule whose wife a woman would be at the resurrection of the dead, who had been, one after another, wife to seven brothers in this life. Surely now they would at least

have room for debate and sophistry; but to their amazement, with a wave of His hand Jesus lifted the question out of the realm of discussion with the solemn and lofty statement that brought heaven and immortality closer to earth than mortal eyes had ever seen them before: "They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; but are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

The enemies of Jesus then gave up the plan of matching wits with Him by asking Him questions, for invariably the questions proved to be boomerangs. Some other way must be concocted to bring about the ruin and disrepute of the man.

The Woman
Whom Jesus
Refused to
Condemn

XIII

The Woman Whom Jesus Refused to Condemn



ESUS was teaching in the temple in the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles. On the previous day He had so greatly angered the chief priests and the Pharisees that they determined to kill Him. Police were sent to arrest Him but they dared not to touch Him. Something so magnetic and splendid imbued His speech and personality that they listened on the outskirts of the crowd awhile and came back without Him. "Where is your prisoner?" they were asked. "Why did ye not bring Him?" But they could only shake their heads and say, "Never man so spake."

The Pharisees sneered, "Are ye also led astray?"

A little later, in the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, who had been wonderfully taken with Christ's words and deeds, asked, "Doth our law judge a man without a hearing?" But all he got was

a sneer of suspicion, "Art thou also of Galilee?"

The Pharisees went away that night angry, and resolved to pursue Jesus to death. They must find some way to trap Him. He was so popular with the crowd that unlawful proceedings against Him were dangerous unless He could be caused to do some foolish thing that would either turn the crowd against Him or get Him into trouble with the authorities.

Levi, one of the leaders of the group of Pharisees who hated Jesus, learned that night that a man and a woman not legally married were living together as husband and wife in a house near where he lived. At once he arranged with four others among his friends to go early, before the man and woman would rise in the morning, break into the house, find them occupying the same room, and take the woman to the temple and question Jesus if they should stone her to death as Moses commanded.

Levi slapped his knee with glee. "We will have Him in a trap then, whatever He says. If He says, 'Stone her,' it will react against Him with the crowd and they will all turn against Him and say that His so-called gospel



Hofmann. 1824-1902

CHRIST AND THE ADULTRESS

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? . . . So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. *John VIII, 5, 7.*

of 'love and mercy' is a fraud; but if He says 'No,' then He is teaching contrary to the law of Moses and the Sanhedrin. We'll condemn Him for that."

"Good! Good!" shouted the others. "Surely you are a long headed old fellow, Levi," said Nahum, the next eldest in the group.

So, next morning before dawn, the neighbor's house was rudely broken open and the man allowed to escape, but the frightened and helpless woman was compelled to go with them a little later to the Temple.

Jesus was in the midst of a talk with His disciples and the crowd of interested listeners gathered about when Levi and his four fellow-conspirators came in. Levi and Nahum, one on either side, held the poor frightened and shamed woman, sobbing in fear and sorrow, and half dragged her through the crowd until they reached the immediate presence of Jesus.

They burst rudely upon Him, interrupting what He was saying, and hypocritically appealed for His advice and counsel. "Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law of Moses, we

are commanded to stone such: what then sayest thou of her?"

Jesus let His eyes rest for a moment on the five accusing men and the sobbing woman, and then, without saying a word, He stooped over and began to write on the ground.

There was an embarrassing silence for a moment, and nothing was heard save an occasional sob from the accused woman. But Levi, nudged by Nahum from behind, repeated his question. There was still no reply; hence, thinking he had Jesus so confused that He did not know what to say, he put his question the more insistently for the third time. Suddenly Jesus straightened up and looked Levi straight in the eyes. "Very well," he said; "he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Then, as if the matter was settled, Jesus stooped over and again began to write upon the ground.

This strange conduct and utterly unexpected answer got on Levi's nerves. Involuntarily he stepped forward to see what Jesus had written, and I think this is what he read: "Levi, by deliberate and cold-blooded cruelty, broke his wife's heart and caused her to die before her time." He drew back, stung by

alarm and shame, seemed about to speak, cast a look of unutterable hate at Jesus, glanced quickly about to see if others had read the charge, and then, as tho he had suddenly remembered an important engagement, he pushed his way through the astonished crowd of onlookers and walked rapidly out of the Temple. Two of his friends just coming in met him and were amazed that he stared at them without a word of recognition, and one said to the other, "What is wrong with Levi? He looks as if he had seen a ghost." To which the other answered, "I shouldn't wonder if Levi sees a good many ghosts with that icy heart of his. I have never known any one who really loved him."

Nahum was next in age among the committee which had brought the disgraced woman to Jesus. He was alarmed and apprehensive at the conduct of Levi; but, if he died for it, he must know what made Levi change his mind so suddenly. So he stepped forward until he could read the message on the ground and, catching sight of his own name, read: "Nahum lied to a poor widow, defrauded her of her property, and left her to suffer and die in want." His face blanched, white as death.

His eyes fairly stood out in fear as he looked down at Jesus, and then he, too, without a word, but, shoving every one out of the way, made for the door with a scared, set face. A wag in the crowd said to the man next him, "Did you ever see men in such a hurry to get away? Nahum doesn't seem to care about stoning women just now."

The rest of the group of accusers were by this time very curious to know what had caused such strange conduct on the part of two such stern religionists as Levi and Nahum. So Safed pushed up until he could read over Christ's shoulder. With a shudder he beheld these words: "Safed slandered a pure woman, and caused her to lose her good name and be driven from her husband's home." He threw a hunted look at Christ and then at the crowd, stood irresolute for a moment and then was gone without a word. Again the wag remarked, "That's the first time I ever saw Safed without anything to say. He is usually as windy as a sand storm."

Simon, a proud, haughty, self-righteous man, was next. There was something pompous about Simon which seemed to say: "You will not see me running away like the others."

But he, too, lost his proud mien as he read: "Simon was saved from an act of adultery only because the woman he pursued and sought to wrong refused him." Shocked and blushing he, too, stumbled on out of the Temple.

There was only one left, Nathan, a jaunty young fellow, very self-assured when he followed the older men in with the shamed and sobbing woman, but now very anxious and nervous. He paused for only a fleeting glance at the ground, but he saw: "Nathan is even now pursuing a young girl, hoping to lead her into sinful conduct." In a panic he fairly ran from the place.

The disciples, and the rest of the onlookers, stood amazed; they looked at each other and at Jesus, who was still bending over His writing. Even the wag had become silent with amazement and wonder.

The woman had dried her tears as she witnessed the departure of the men who had dragged her so mercilessly to Jesus. Now she was watching Jesus with growing surprise and hope.

At length He straightened Himself up and looked into her face, deep down into her very

soul. He looked, not in accusation, but with deep tenderness and love that is without guile. After a moment He said, "Woman, where are they? Did no man condemn thee?" And she said, "No man, Lord."

Jesus looked into her soul with a look that made her feel as tho His great loving heart would break if she ever went wrong again, and said in the sweetest voice she had ever heard; "Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."

John, who tells the story, was not standing where he could see, but as she passed Jesus she slyly took the hem of His garment in her hand and pressed it to her lips.

I believe she would have died before she would have failed to keep faith with Jesus.

Peter's
Story
of the
Last
Night

XIV

Peter's Story of the Last Night

I



NOT MANY misunderstandings would exist among good people, I think, if the one aggrieved would just pause and, in imagination, summon the absent friend and allow him to tell his own story in a natural, straightforward manner. In that way one would get the viewpoint from the other side. So after long study of the puzzling stories told in the Gospels about the last night, I decided to summon Simon Peter himself and let that great impulsive boy-man, who never quite grew up, tell his own story of that last dark night before the crucifixion of Jesus, that night in which he played such a conspicuous and, in many ways, such a regrettable part.

As I looked into his big, blue eyes and his large, full face, softened and gentled by the years, I knew that at last I should get a frank

statement of that marvelous night as Peter remembered it.

"Tell me, Peter," said I, fearing he might get away from me, "tell me about the Last Supper. What are the things that stand out clearest in your memory?"

"Ah, it is all burned into my memory forever!" he answered. "The first disturbing event was the strife among us as to who should have the places of honor next to Jesus at the table. It seems strange to me now that we should have been so selfish, but we were all pretty much alike; for when Judas managed to get the seat of honor next to Christ on the left, a place I felt that I myself deserved, I was so disgusted that I went clear to the other end of the table. I did not mind John's having the place next Jesus on the right, because we all knew Jesus specially loved him; and besides, John was my best friend. The other nine filled in the places between. The little quarrel about places so grieved Jesus that He rose from the table and took off His upper garment and girded Himself with a towel and, with bare arms and body naked to the waist, took a basin, which He partly filled with water, and

began to wash our feet, beginning with those of John. I was not often speechless; I frequently talked first and thought afterwards, to my shame; but I was so astonished at the sight that I sat silent as the rest, without a word. Poor John, hardly more than a boy, was so embarrassed he did not know what to do; first his eyes filled with tears, and then he hid his face in the pillow on the couch on which he reclined. Christ served one after another, washing their feet and wiping them with the towel. I can never forget the thoughts that surged through my mind as I watched Him. I said to myself, 'This is the Christ who came walking on the waves through the storm at night and who reached out His hand and saved me when I was sinking. This is the Christ I saw talking on Mount Hermon with Moses and Elijah the night He was transfigured before us and His face was illumined with indescribable glory. This is the Christ who raised Lazarus from the dead. And now He is garbed like a slave, doing a slave's work. Here He comes! It is my turn next! I can not let Him wash my feet!' He turned toward me with the water basin, and I started up, exclaiming, 'No,

Lord, You shall never wash my feet!' He looked at me with a sad smile, saying patiently, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no share with me.'

"That broke down all my resistance in a moment. My heart melted; with tears running down my face, I cried, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Then as He bent over, washing my big dusty feet, He said gently, 'He that hath bathed hath no need save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'

"Making the round of the table, Jesus came to Judas last and I thought Judas seemed very uneasy, but he remained silent. After Jesus had put on His garments again and sat down, and we were all so shamed we knew not what to say, He looked about on us with a tender smile and said: 'If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for a servant is not greater than his Lord.' I felt very humble and mean just then for having been so anxious to get the seat of honor.

"Jesus served the supper and went on talking to us, saying the wonderful, unforgettable things you well know. Then suddenly He

startled us with that statement: 'Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.' All around the table the cry came from one man after another, 'Lord, is it I?'

"I caught John's amazed look and motioned him to ask who it was? Who should do such a foul deed? He understood me and whispered to Jesus, 'Who is it?' And the Lord replied in a whisper which John alone heard, 'He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it to him.' And immediately He dipped the sop and handed it to Judas, saying, 'Judas, What thou doest, do quickly.' Judas gave the Master a startled look half of fear and half of defiance and went out. Nor did we see him again until he came to us in the Garden.

"Soon after Judas had gone came that first Communion. I have no words to tell of the holy solemnity of it. The Lord took the pass-over loaf in His hands and broke it in pieces and gave each of us a piece, saying as He did so, 'Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.'

"Then while we all gazed upon Him in awe, He took a cup of wine, took a sup of it Himself, and then going from one to another

of us He pressed it to our lips and said in His soft, tender voice the words that mellowed our hearts and brought tears to all our eyes: 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.'

"Then followed that wonderful conversation and the prayer which John has recorded and the singing of the psalm. I can see Jesus now with His blessed head thrown back as He led the singing in which we all joined:

Throw open the Gates of the Right;
I will enter them praising *The Life*;—
That is the Gate to the Lord
And the Righteous will enter by it!
I give thanks, because You have heard,—
You have become Savior to me,—
A Stone by the builders despised,
Has gone to the head of the Spire!
This result came from the Lord,—
And a wonder it was in our sight!
This the Lord has done to-day;—
Over it we are glad, and rejoice!

"When the singing was finished the Master said, 'Let us go hence;' and we went out toward the Mount of Olives."

II

"Peter," said I, "I have often wondered how with your singularly frank and genuine

nature, a nature naturally brave, how it was possible for you to have denied Christ on the same night, following the Last Supper!"

"You can not have marveled at that so much as I," answered Peter. "But I think I can explain much of the mystery of it to you. When we came out from the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where the pass-over feast had been eaten, and started toward the Mount of Olives nearly a mile away, I felt that I must reassure Jesus of my loyalty. During the conversation at the supper table, when Jesus had told us that He was going away and that where He was going we could not then follow Him, I had said, speaking from the very depths of my soul, 'Lord, I will lay down my life for thee;' and to my grief and amazement, Jesus answered, 'Thou shalt deny me, Peter, before the cock crows.'

"I was so crushed by those words that I could say nothing in response, and the other disciples looked at me with suspicion and indignation. But now, when we had come out into the open air, I pressed close to the Lord and said, 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death!' And to my great anguish he replied: 'Simon, Simon!' using

the name He often used on very serious and important occasions, 'I tell thee, before the cock shall crow this day, thou shalt deny me three times.' In the bitterness of my soul I cried out in reply, 'Lord, tho I should die with thee, yet would I not deny thee!'

"Then we went on to the Garden of the Wine-press, called Gethsemane, and when we reached it Jesus told the others that He wished to be alone with James and John and me, and for them to remain where they were for a while. They were not surprized at this, for He often took the Zebedee brothers and me with Him alone on special occasions. As soon as we had reached a retired part of the Garden the Lord asked us to watch while He went aside to pray.

"It had been a long, grueling day, and the evening, for it was now nearly midnight, had been filled with so much nerve-straining surprise and grief that, in spite of ourselves, we could not keep awake, and we were all ashamed when He came back again, and again a second time, and found us asleep.

"When finally He came back and said, 'He who betrayeth me is here,' I was awake and alert in a moment, and said within myself,

‘Now I will show Jesus whether or not I am a coward. I will show Him that Peter knows how to die, if need be, for Him.’ And when we met the soldiers with the priests, and when the other disciples came rushing up—all meaning to defend Him—and Judas came right on and put his arms about Jesus and kissed Him, seemingly with the deepest affection, for he kissed Him twice, and Jesus drew back and said in a hurt tone, ‘Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?’ it was hard to keep from killing the traitor on the spot. But I waited, having my eyes on the crowd of officers pressing forward.

“Suddenly Jesus spoke in loud, firm tones, ‘Whom seek ye?’

“‘We seek Jesus of Nazareth,’ answered the captain of the troops.

“‘I am He,’ answered Jesus; and as He said it He seemed to radiate light and power, and some of the soldiers actually fell to the ground and all fell back as if in fright. In a moment all of the eleven disciples, loyal to Jesus, surrounded Him, ready if need be to die with Him, and Judas slunk in behind the soldiers to get away from us. Then the soldiers took courage again and advanced to

arrest the Lord. I was the only one who carried a sword and I drew it, and as Malchus, the High Priest's servant, rushed forward, I struck at him, intending to kill him, but he dodged the blow, and I cut off his ear. As I raised my sword to strike again, all nerved up for the fight, Jesus spoke in a voice of command, 'Put up your swords! My Father has given me a cup. Shall I not drink it?' And He stepped forward and touched the wounded man's ear and it was healed. The captain's hand dropped for a moment from Christ's shoulder, and Jesus said, 'Could I not pray my Father and he would send twelve legions of angels to defend me.'

"Then Jesus turned to the amazed captain and said, 'I am He whom you seek; let these,' waving His hand toward us, His disciples, 'go their way.'

"So, as they led Jesus away bound, we all slipped back into the olive orchard. Can you not realize how I felt? I had been ready to fight and die for my Lord, but He would not permit me. When I wounded His enemy, He healed him. What could I do? Of course, we all know now that it was a part of God's great plan for the redemption of the world

that He should give Himself up to die. But up to that time, tho I had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, I still believed He was to be a temporal king, and my hopes were all prostrate in the dust."

III

"But, Peter, why did you ever go to the place where Christ was on trial if you had lost your hope in Him?" I asked.

"There did not seem to be any place else to go," answered Peter. "For three years Christ had been the center of my life. I had just lived in Him. I had to follow on. So when for safety's sake we had all scattered in the darkness, each going his own way, after a little I felt that I must go and see what was happening to Jesus. I followed a long way behind the group, whose course I could see by the light of their torches in the distance. When I came to the house where Jesus had been taken, one shared by Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the High Priest, I saw John just going in after the group. John had a friend among the guard at the door who let him in. I waited about for a while, and John, who really loved me very much and

never wished to be separated from me, came out and found me and got the doorkeeper to let me come with him into the courtyard of the building where Jesus was held. As I stepped through the door, a serving-woman looked close into my face and said, 'Art not thou also one of His disciples?' With that the utter hopelessness of the situation came over me. Jesus had given Himself up into the hands of His enemies; He had refused my aid; He had said He could have twelve legions of soldiers for the asking but would not ask. What could I do? In my despair the instinct of self-defense was aroused, and in an offended manner I answered the accusing woman, 'I do not know Him!'

"It was a cold night and the servants had kindled a brightly burning fire in a brazier in the courtyard and I went over to warm by it. How many times afterward did I regret warming myself at that devil's fire! The same serving-woman who had questioned me at the door now came by again and stopped and stared at me a long time. I know I blushed under her searching look; I could not help it. And she came up to me and said, 'You were with Jesus of Nazareth! I saw



Harrach. 1832-1915

DENIAL OF ST. PETER

And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. *Luke XXIII, 60-62.*

you with Him.' Then my anger as well as my fear flamed up. I used to be a great man to curse when angry, in my young fishing days, but during the past three years with Jesus I had put all such language out of my speech. Now, under that stress of temper and fear, I swore the old forgotten oaths and said, 'Woman, I know Him not!' She went away shaking her head, only partially convinced; and some of the men attracted by the vehemence of my denials gathered about me, and one said, 'Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrayeth thee.' Then a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear I had cut off with my sword at the time of Christ's arrest, came up and asked, 'Did I not see thee in the Garden with Him?' By that time I was wild with alarm, and answered with bitter curses that I knew Him not.

At that very moment, Jesus was passing by from Annas to the other part of the house where Caiaphas lived, and He saw me and heard my curses of denial. I looked into His face. Oh, the grief of that look! There was no anger in it; but I can never forget, tho it has all been forgiven, the tender grief of that look. Like a flash there came over me what

Jesus had said. And at that instant a cock crew for the dawn! All that prophecy of Jesus which had so amazed me had come true. My conscience awoke. My heart broke. I burst into tears of anguish. The bitter drops ran down my face. I rushed out into the darkness."

**The Boy
Who Lost
His Sheet**

XV

The Boy Who Lost His Sheet



HOW STRANGELY different the same mind will act on different occasions. How often you have read an incident in the Bible, or in some other book frequently perused, without seeing anything in the story except the obvious message which the words convey; and then on the tenth or the ten hundredth time there springs up a new message between the lines, standing out as clearly as if written in red ink, a message never seen before, but one that, having been discovered, will not down or be forgotten.

It was like that with me concerning a very strange experience which befell John Mark on the night of the arrest of Jesus in the olive garden of Gethsemane so long ago.

I had been reading over and over again since boyhood that story as Mark tells it in his Gospel, never without special interest in the little story of the young man who came so near being arrested with Jesus, and only es-

caped by slipping out of his sheet and running away naked through the orchard. As a boy it amused me, and gave me a certain feeling of kinship in the boyish method of escape. And yet it had no special significance until the other evening when, rereading the old story, I came to that little aside, the incident of the elusive youth. It then flashed over me in a moment, as tho I had known always who the boy was. It was John Mark himself, of course! That is why neither Matthew nor John nor Luke refer to it. Matthew and John were gone before he came into notice, and no one knew of it to give the story to Luke. Mark tells it because he is, himself, the youth who lost his sheet!

As I rejoiced in this new-found assurance, the whole story which I now relate came to my consciousness as clearly as if Mark himself had appeared in the flesh and sat in the chair opposite me in my study and had told it to me in good plain English. In spirit he did sit there, and this is the story he told:

“As you have long since known, my mother was Mary, a well-to-do widow who lived in Jerusalem in the days when Jesus wrought His wonderful deeds and taught, as never

man had taught, the wonderful things about God and man. She was attracted to Jesus early in His ministry and was the bosom friend of Mary of Magdala and of Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and aided them in furnishing the means to support Jesus and His disciples during the years of His public life.

"I was only a boy in my teens, but was large for my age. Mother, who loved Jesus with all her heart, greatly desired that her only son should see as much as possible of Jesus and should also become acquainted with His disciples. I knew them all, tho my greatest friendship was with Peter, whose impulsive ways and big-hearted manners often caused me to feel he was as much of a boy as I, tho he was old enough to be my father, and, indeed, in later years, when I also became a minister and a missionary, he called me his son and gave me a father's love. And when I came to write my story of the life of our Lord, Peter was my chief counselor and gave me many of the facts which I have there recorded.

"I well remember the evening when Joseph of Arimathea, who with his wife was a great friend of my mother, came to see her. 'Mary,'

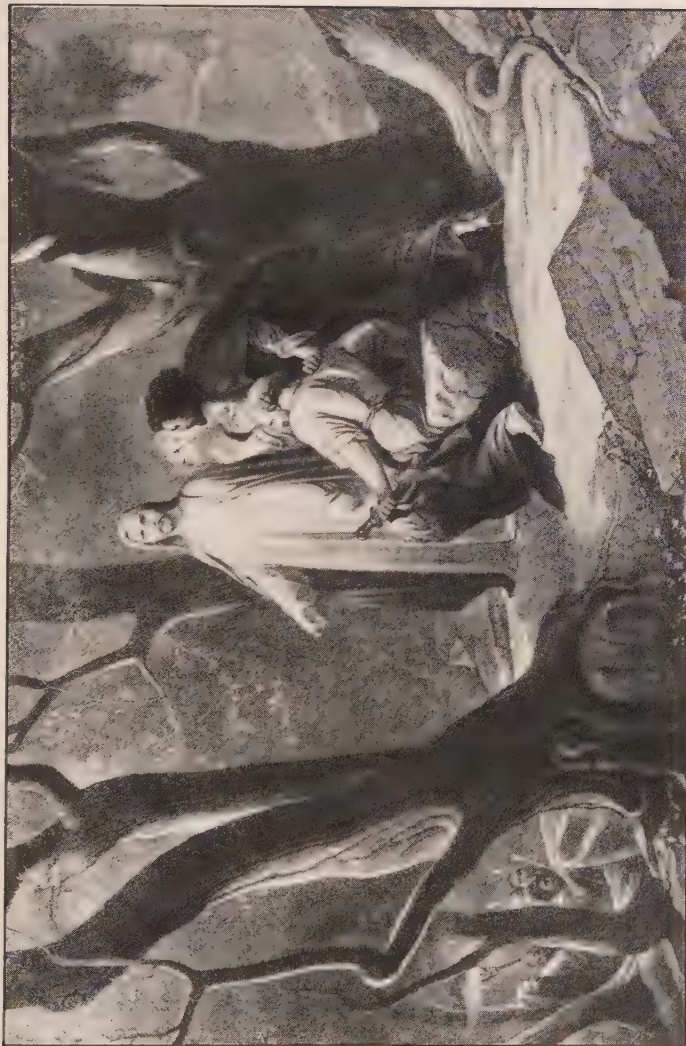
he said, 'I wish to ask you to do me a great favor, which I am sure you will be glad to grant, for I know well that Jesus is as dear to you as to me.'

"To which my mother replied, 'You know, Joseph, that I will be happy to do anything in my power to serve you; and as for Jesus, all that I am and all that I have are His for the asking.'

"As she said this her eyes filled with grateful tears and her face flushed with feeling.

"Then Joseph went on to explain that it was necessary to find some place for Jesus and His disciples to eat the Passover together. That both he and Nicodemus would feel honored and very happy to have them in either of their homes, but because of their position as members of the Sanhedrin it seemed wise that some quieter place be found; so he would suggest that mother give them her large upper room for Thursday evening. And so it was arranged; and Joseph, as well as his wife and Nicodemus, came and assisted in seeing that all was ready for the Passover feast for Jesus and His friends.

"I shall never forget peering in through the door, boylike—for big as I was, I was little



Jalabert. 1819-1901

JESUS AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. *Mark XIV, 43.*

more than a boy—just at the time when Jesus was praying God's blessing on the food. The light shining in His blessed face, and the bowed heads of His disciples as they listened, have remained in my mind through the years that have passed. There was only one whose head was not bowed, and that was the head of Judas Iscariot. He was looking at Jesus, and there was a certain hardness in his look and an evil scowl on his cunning face that startled me. I had taken a boyish dislike to Judas long before. He was the only one among the twelve that I disliked, even strange old Simon the Zealot, Judas' father, a visionary, erratic man, had something honest and lovable about him; but Judas was selfish. He always wanted the best seat, and was always growling over any bills that had to be paid.

"I told my mother one day that I thought she was foolish to give money to Judas, who carried the bag for the disciples. But mother said, 'Hush, Mark, you must not speak like that. If Jesus can keep Judas as His disciple, it is not for me to criticize him.'

"But I did not like him, and I did not like his look that night.

"I had had a busy day, and when our supper

was over and the Master and His disciples were still conversing in the upper room, I went to my own bed in another room on the same floor, put off my clothes, and soon fell asleep. How long I slept I do not know, but was awakened by the singing of Jesus and His disciples, and shortly after I heard them leaving.

“As the Lord and His disciples passed out, boylike, and being now thoroughly awake, I felt that I would like to follow them a little and see where they went. So I gathered my bed sheet about me and barefooted slipped along in the shadows behind as they walked. Every now and then they would come out into the bright moonlight and I could see each one in detail, and thus discovering that Judas was not there, I wondered what had become of him. As they walked along I saw they were going to my mother’s olive orchard, called the Garden of Gethsemane because of a great olive press which had been there since the days of my grandfather. Mother had urged Jesus to go there either alone or with His disciples whenever He wished, and He often went there to rest when He was weary or to spend hours at a time in quiet meditation and prayer.

“When they had passed into the garden, Jesus left all of them, except James and John and Peter, behind, and with these three passed across the orchard to where the great old trees threw deep shadows. Being barefooted and naturally light on my feet, knowing every tree and path in the orchard, where I had played off and on since babyhood, I was able to keep very close to these four without being seen.

“When they had reached the deepest shadows of the orchard I heard Jesus say to the other three in a voice of heavy sorrow, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch.’ And then as they sat down silently on the ground, Jesus went on a little further and came out into the moonlight where I could see Him more clearly. Suddenly He fell on His knees, with His hands convulsively clasped together above His head, and then, while I almost cried out for Him, He threw Himself prone on the ground, His face in the dust, and groaned out as if in agony: ‘Father, all things are possible with thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.’

“Then He arose and came back to where He

had left Peter and James and John and spoke to them and they were asleep. My own boyish heart had broken as I heard the prayer of Jesus, and my face was wet with tears of sympathy, and I felt a flash of sudden anger that they slept, but now that I am older I know it was only the burden of their sorrow that caused them to sleep.

“Jesus spoke very tenderly and patiently: ‘Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.’

“Then Peter said something I could not quite hear. It must have been an apology for sleeping, for Jesus said, very, very kindly, ‘I know, I understand perfectly, Peter. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.’

“Then Jesus came back and kneeled down very near me, and again I heard Him pray: ‘Father, if it be possible, remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.’

“And again He went back to the disciples, and they were again asleep. They roused from sleep and mumbled something I could not distinguish clearly about being unable to keep awake.

“Then Jesus came back. He knelt again, but this time His prayer was silent. I did not hear any words. Then He came back to Peter, James, and John; and when He spoke His voice was cheerful, and all the agony was gone out of it.

“Just then I saw a light coming in at the gate of the Garden. A great torch threw a weird light over the group, and I saw that the man who led a company of soldiers was Judas. When I reached home later that night my mother told me that Judas came there first, seeking Jesus, and she, catching sight of the soldiers, asked Judas what it meant, and he said, ‘I was afraid the Teacher might be attacked and brought these to guard Him.’

“Almost immediately Jesus said, as He, too, caught sight of Judas and the soldiers: ‘The hour is come; behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold he that betrayeth me is at hand.’ At that Peter, James, and John leaped to their feet, and the four walked rapidly toward the gate. Just before they met the group coming in, the rest of the disciples, alarmed by the light and the sound of voices entering the garden, came seeking the Master.

“Just then a torch held high in the hand of a giant soldier threw its light on the face and form of Jesus, and I noticed that His sorrow was all gone and in His face there was peace. Then Judas, seeing Him, came running as tho in great joy, and after making a low courtesy to Jesus, kissed Him in seeming affection.

“Then I saw the tenderest look of grief I have ever seen come over the face of Jesus as He said, ‘Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?’

“As He said that the soldiers ran up and seized Jesus rudely by the arms. The Master was not at all excited, but said questioningly, ‘Are ye come out as against a robber, with swords and staves to seize me? I was daily with you in the Temple teaching, and ye took me not: but this is done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.’

“Then Peter made a sudden rush forward with a drawn sword and attacked the servant of the High Priest from behind and cut off his ear. I thought that was the end of Peter, for a dozen swords flashed to strike him; but Jesus reached forward and touched the man’s ear and it was well again. So amazed were the soldiers at the wonderful deed that they

fell back and seemed to forget all about Peter. Jesus spoke then to the captain of the guard: 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom ye seek. Take me and let these other men go their way.' And in a moment the disciples had slipped away and were gone.

"Now while these things had been happening, I had forgotten all about not being properly dressed, and in boyish curiosity and interest I had pressed forward, not wishing to lose anything, until I found myself following close to Jesus as they led Him away a prisoner. I was not noticed at first, but one of the torches falling on me with its flaring light, a soldier leaped forward and grabbed at me, saying: 'Whom have we here?' and as he said it he caught hold of my sheet, and I, suddenly stooping, slipped out of the sheet, leaving it in his clutch. He struck at me with his sword and sheared off two of the fingers on my right hand at the first joint. I ran away naked with my bleeding fingers. They pursued me for a moment, but knowing the place well, I outran them and was soon at home with my mother, tearfully wrapping up my wounded hand. That is how I came to be called 'Mark, the stump-fingered.' "

How Simon
of Cyrene
Came to
Bear the
Cross

XVI

How Simon of Cyrene Came to Bear the Cross



GENERATION before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, an impoverished but loyal Hebrew with his young wife fled from the persecutions of the Roman invader in Judea and made his home at Cyrene, a town on the north coast of Africa. That is, he set up his business there and began a life of toil and trade. No true Jew ever counted any spot his home outside the Holy Land of Judea, which held the Temple of his ancestors. Here in Cyrene, to their great joy, a babe was born to them, and in memory of their sacred traditions they named him Simeon, which the long years have shortened to Simon. The boy grew into a great, broad-shouldered, happy-hearted man and in turn married a good girl in the family of another Hebrew refugee from Judea, and in due time two boys were born to them, Alexander and Rufus.

These young people, Simon and his wife, had been brought up and carefully trained as children of Abraham in the faith of their fathers, and in their breasts burned brightly the fires of patriotic devotion.

Now it so happened that the very year Jesus died on Calvary for the sins of the world, Simon had been planning to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem and enjoy the Passover services in the Temple. It was to be the greatest and most wonderful experience of his life. He was a good man and just, and would gladly have taken his wife and little boys with him, but they all realized that the distance and expense made this impossible. So the anticipations of the whole family were centered in the joy of Simon, who was to bring back to them the marvelous stories of his journey and experiences in the Holy City.

Jerusalem was filled to overflowing with the crowds that had come to attend the Passover services, and, like Jesus and His disciples, Simon found lodging in the home of a pious family outside the city. So it happened that on the night that Jesus and His disciples ate the last supper together in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, Simon ate

his Passover feast in the house of friends out in a suburban home.

During the days before the Passover Supper he had seen Jesus in the Temple and had heard Him confounding the scribes and the Pharisees. His open mind and honest heart had gone out in the hope that Jesus was the Messiah whom he had been taught from childhood to expect as the great Redeemer of his people. On that eventful night Simon did not fall asleep until late, and in the pure air of the springtime in the country he slept soundly and awoke late. So Jerusalem had long been aroused and wonderfully alive before this huge stranger from Cyrene, with his heart full of pleasure at the wonderful privilege he was enjoying, reached the city on the day after the Passover feast. He did not know of the agony of Gethsemane. He knew nothing of the arrest of Jesus in the Mount of Olives. He did not know that all night long a betraying Judas, lying witnesses, accusing priests, harassing and cruel soldiers, and a corrupt and cowardly judge, had, by hatred and perjury and mockery and lash, worn to the last limit the strength in the beautiful body of the Christ to whom he had listened in the

Temple for days with such interest and hope.

Simon arrived just in time to see the shouting, excited crowd as they came out from Pilate's hall. In the noise and hubbub he heard the names "Jesus" and "Barabbas" and the shriller cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He caught the arm of a man whose face promised kindly sympathy and asked the reason for the excitement.

"Why, where have you been that you do not know?" exclaimed the man in astonishment. Simon replied, "I am lodging outside the city, and have but just arrived. I am a stranger from Africa."

Then the other said, "Jesus of Nazareth has just been on trial before Pilate, the Roman Governor, and has been given over to be crucified outside the city walls. But I do not believe He will die. I live in Nazareth. I was there when Jesus came there to preach His first sermon three years ago."

At this moment there arose another great clamor, and the words of Simon's chance acquaintance from Nazareth were drowned in the din. But Simon kept close to the side of the man who, perchance, could tell him more of this interesting Jesus. Indeed, he was

thankful to have met with some one from Nazareth. As soon as the noise subsided he asked, anxious to press on through the crowd as quickly as he could and learn a little more from one who had known Jesus at his home town, "What were you saying? Why don't you believe He will die?"

As they walked, the interesting acquaintance explained: "Three years ago I saw Him taken by a mob in our own little town. They were going to kill Him by throwing Him over a precipice. Just when they were about to do it, He slipped away so mysteriously that no one seemed to know how He left. I tell you there is some strange power about Him. I am not a bit afraid He will really be killed. He'll get away from His tormentors as slick as He did at Nazareth—just about the time they think they have really made an end of Him. I'm going to go all the way and see how He does it."

Simon the Cyrenian began to edge his way, this way and that, to get nearer Jesus. The citizen from Nazareth, a much smaller man than the big muscular Cyrenian, had no trouble in getting through the crowd by sticking close to Simon's back and following

through the openings made by him. Now they were near enough to catch frequent glimpses of Jesus, and tho Simon knew nothing of that long night of agony, he was not deceived when again and again he saw Jesus stumble and almost fall and heard the deriding mob: "He's only feigning!" "He can carry that cross!" "Get up! Go on!" Indeed, Simon felt sure He could go on but a few steps more.

Women wrung their hands and wept, and Jesus turned His sad face kindly toward them and said, His thoughts and sympathy now as always for others, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." Then as He bent lower Simon crowded nearer, until he was almost beside the soldiers and could plainly see that the grime on Jesus' face and hands was blood stains and that His clothes were all torn, and that fresh blood was trickling down His temples from the goading thorns which were pressing into His brow.

Just then a burly ruffian among the soldiers prodded Jesus with a baton. With that prod Jesus fell upon His face in the dust. Instantly, Simon, whose heart was bleeding in sympathy, but who had not dared to interfere,



Raphael. 1483-1520

CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS

And the soldiers led him away. . . . And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head. . . . And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him. . . . And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. *Mark XV, 16-21.*

involuntarily gave a quick groan and threw out both hands as if to save Him. The centurion at Jesus' side saw it and recognized his opportunity. Here was one of Jesus' followers probably, no doubt there were several in the crowd; but they were too intimidated to reveal the fact. This big fellow could be of use. They were moving too slowly and he wished the whole miserable affair were over—why shouldn't this big, husky sympathizer carry the cross if he felt so sorry for Jesus? The centurion hesitated a moment, for it was customary for the doomed man to carry his own cross. Jesus lay in the dust and other soldiers held back the mob, which determinedly shouted and jeered: "Make Him carry it! He's only feigning! Make Him get up and go on! He could make the lame walk! He could raise the dead! He could make a half-dead man carry his bed on the Sabbath! Let Him carry His own cross!"

But the centurion was sick of this creeping, howling funeral procession. With a quick survey of the big Cyrenian with brawny arms, he commanded, "You carry that cross! Take it on your own back!"

No man, even if he would, dared disobey

the order of a Roman soldier, and Simon stooped and lifted the cross from Jesus' prostrate body.

So it was that Simon the Cyrenian had that most-to-be-coveted position on that day of all days—the enviable burden of Jesus' cross upon his own back—to bear it in Jesus' stead. Simon, a man who had never known the Master! Oh, what would not that other Simon, Simon Peter, the friend and companion of Jesus through all His ministry, have given, three days later, could he have been the one to have borne the awful burden up that mountain of agony, and so have lent even that little help to the One who had done so much for him?

With the weight of the cross lifted, Jesus again struggled to His feet and was driven on. As Simon the Cyrenian, the cross on his own strong back, walked slowly by Jesus' side, he had plenty of time to look on His face and observe how sincere were His sufferings, how great and kind and uncomplaining He was, and how cruel were His tormentors. Before they reached the top of the mountain where that greatest of all earthly tragedies was about to take place, Simon was saying in

his own heart, as the centurion was to exclaim aloud an hour later, "Truly this is the Son of God!" This sure conviction gave him hope that the man with whom he had just walked and talked—that other man from Nazareth—was right. "Perhaps—" he thought, "perhaps He will slip away at the last, just as they say He did when they would have killed Him at Nazareth!" But step by step the procession drew nearer the place prepared for the crucifixion. Again and again Simon hoped, "Now, now, and now—it will happen!" But nothing astonishing did happen, and he began to look back. How he wished he might see the face of that man who saw Jesus when He was so nearly killed and yet saved Himself! "Does that fellow believe even yet that He will get away? Oh, that He might!" thought Simon. "Truly, truly this man is the Son of God!" But Simon dared not turn back to look for encouragement in the face of that new-found acquaintance who had such faith in Jesus' ultimate escape, for the soldiers were at his back.

Just before they reached the summit of Golgotha, Jesus said softly, "Simon!" Astonished, he looked into the face of the scarred

and blood-stained man whose cross he was carrying. Never while he lived would he forget that look. There was all the steadfastness of the stars in those eyes. There was all the warmth and confidence and inspiration of the sun in them. There was all the strength of a father and all the tenderness of a mother in them. That look thrilled Simon through his whole being. The cross he carried, which had begun to seem heavy, even to his broad shoulder, was light as thistledown. Then a wonderful thing happened—Jesus smiled. That wounded and blood-sprinkled countenance was suddenly illumined as if all the joy in heaven and on earth shone through and radiated from it; and Jesus, speaking for Simon's ears only, said, "Fear not, Simon, if with patience you bear my cross, with joy you shall wear my crown."

And then they arrived at the place of crucifixion.

* * * * *

All through the awful nightmare of that day and the next, Simon lingered about Jerusalem. On that first Easter day he was walk-

ing alone, pondering, wondering over it all, when he was accosted by a man who looked earnestly and kindly into his face and asked, "Are you not the man who carried the cross for Jesus on Friday?" "Yes," answered Simon, "and I would give all I possess if I could look in that blessed face alive again."

"Come walk with me!" said Cleopas, for so he told Simon was his name. "I am going out to my home in Emmaus and I have wonderful things to tell you that have happened this morning." So Simon, who bore the cross up Calvary on Good Friday, came to know Jesus and love Him with all his heart.

When he went back to Cyrene in Africa he told his wife and his two little boys all about it, and they, too, became happy Christians. The boys grew up to be such strong and reliable Christian men that when Mark came to write his Gospel and to tell the story of Simon's bearing the cross for Jesus, he reminds the people to whom he wrote that Simon was the father of "Alexander and Rufus," who were known to them as stalwart Christian men. And when Paul, in his letter to the Romans, is sending his love to a large list of the most devoted of the early Christians,

one of the tenderest messages of all with which he closes that letter is this: "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."

No doubt Simon, who bore the cross for his Lord, and the elder son, Alexander, had already gone to their reward, but the memory of the tenderness and Christian love with which Simon's wife had ministered to the needs of Paul, the great apostle, caused him to remember her with the affection of a son for his mother and to recall Rufus as a brother beloved.

So it was that in his own home among those most dear to him, Christ's promise to Simon on the way to Calvary was gloriously fulfilled.

Watching
With the
Roman
Guard



Plockhorst. 1825-1907

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN

Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. *Mark X, 14, 16.*

XVII

Watching With the Roman Guard



THIS is the night before Easter. I am far away from home, sitting alone in my room in a strange hotel in a strange town. I am very lonely and homesick at the thought that on Easter Sunday I shall be among strangers, when my heart craves the fond fellowship of home.

My thoughts turn to the night before the first Easter, and I read again, as I have done so many times before, all that is written in the Gospels concerning the crucifixion, the burial, the guard set to watch the tomb, and the resurrection of Jesus.

At length that great scene seems to come before me as real as if I were there. I close my eyes, with my head resting on my hand, and I deliberately seek to bring back the stupendous events of that night. I see the garden with Joseph's new tomb, a great stone in the door blocking either entrance or exit. I see by the light of the guard's torch

the Roman seal that has been placed upon the tomb. I see the light of a fire built in a little hole scooped out of the earth, and the soldiers gathered about the flame to keep warm; for tho it is springtime and warm enough during the day, the night is chill and the fire adds both comfort and cheer.

I draw near, but they do not see me as I hover in the darkness outside of the flare of the light but close enough so that in the stillness of the falling night I can hear what they are saying. One rugged soldier, a great cloak about him, seems to be colder than the rest; he gets closer to the fire and holds out his hands over the flames.

"Look at Marcus, see how he hugs the fire!" cries one of the others, laughing hoarsely. "He ought not be cold, he had all the luck and won the coat."

Marcus shrugs his shoulders, "I do not feel right to-night. I can not get it out of my head that He, who wore this coat, said, 'After three days I will rise again.' What if it should be true?"

"Ah," blurts a sneering, brutal voice, "Marcus is afraid he will lose his coat."

"Well," declares Titus, "I know how Mar-

cus feels. I feel much the same way. All day long as we have watched here, I have had a strange premonition every once in a while that something awful is going to happen."

"You don't think a dead man can come back to life, do you?" asks Annas.

"I don't know," replies Titus. "Of course, I know He was dead; I thrust my spear deep into His side, and saw the water and the blood gush forth. I know He was dead—but like Marcus I keep saying to myself, 'It is close to the time when He said He would rise. What if He should come forth from that tomb?' "

"Well, I surely don't want Him to come," interrupts a gloomy, heavy-jawed man, speaking for the first time, tho he has been intently listening to the conversation.

"Why, what difference would it make to you, Brutus?" asks another listener, speaking for the first time.

"Oh, you know what I mean, James," replies the man of gloom. "I plaited that crown of thorns, and I chose the sharpest I could find. I wove it purposely so that the sharpest and longest should be inside, and when I had it done, some mean spirit possessed

me to push it down cruelly on His forehead until the blood ran down His face, and I gloated over the anguish and pain it caused Him; and then He turned and looked on me. I expected to see His eyes flashing with hatred and anger and blazing with fury and to have Him lash me with His keen tongue; I would have enjoyed that, and have given Him back as good as He sent. Instead, He did not say a word—but His eyes, oh, God! such eyes! They looked as if He felt sorry for me and as if He wanted to do something for me. I have not slept since. When I shut my own eyes, those sorrowful, grieving eyes from under the crown of thorns my fingers plaited stare into mine again with that awful look of kindness and grief. Oh, I wonder if He will rise? When I heard Him on the cross say so brokenly and so kindly, like a mother talking about her little children: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,’ He had that same look again in His eyes. Sometimes I almost wish He would rise, so that I might ask Him to forgive me.”

“Stop!” shouted the rough soldier who had asked him what difference it would make to him if Jesus did come. “Stop, Brutus! don’t

go on like that. I can not stand it. If you feel like that, how do you suppose I feel? I mocked Him to His face, like the fool I was! I leered at Him, and spit in His face, and struck Him across His cheek so heavily that it made a red welt. And, as with you, He said not a word, but I can never forget the look He gave me. It makes me hate myself when it comes back to me."

Ah, what has startled them? Why do they act so terrorized? Hush! I hear the sound of voices. Surely it is the voices of children. But it seems strange that children should be coming here, into this garden, after dark. I strain my ears to listen, but the first thing I hear is from one of the soldiers, "It is the band of disciples of the dead man. They are coming, as the chief priests thought they would, to rob the grave."

"Ah, I don't believe it!" says another.

But the voices are drawing nearer and unmistakably it is a girl's voice that calls out, "Come this way, children; here is a light! This must be the place!"

And now a group of boys and girls come out into the light and stand half-scared and half-wondering at the faces and forms of the

soldiers as the flickering light falls upon them.

The soldiers laugh—a relieved laugh; and one coolly remarks, “There’s your band of body snatchers, Annas.”

Now Brutus observes from under his gloomy brow that the children have armloads of wild spring flowers, and he grasps in his mind and heart what they mean. He steps toward them and says, half kindly, “We are under orders to watch this tomb and not let it be disturbed. I do not think it is in any danger from such children as you, but come up here in the light where we can see you, and tell us who you are.”

The children move forward rather timidly, and Brutus, who is old enough to be the older girl’s father, turns to her. She is perhaps twelve years or possibly a year or so more, and he says, “Now, Miss, tell us who you are and why you are here?”

“I am the daughter of Jairus, and I am here because I owe my life to Jesus, and I just had to do something to show my faith in Him and my love for Him. So I asked my mother to let me go and gather these beautiful flowers, because I knew Jesus loved them so much, and bring them and put them at the

door of His tomb as a token of my love and thanks."

"Why do you say that you owe your life to Jesus?" Brutus inquires.

"Why, don't you know? I thought everybody knew that. He came to my home after I was dead, and my father and mother and all my friends were weeping over me, and He took hold of my hand and called to me saying, 'Arise!' and tho I was dead, I heard that call, and I came back to life, and I have been well and happy ever since. Please let me put these flowers at the door of His tomb so they will be the first thing He sees when He comes forth."

"Yes," said Brutus in a choked voice, "yes, little Miss, lay your flowers where you will. I would to God it had been flowers instead of thorns that I gave Him!"

But as the daughter of Jairus lays her flowers at the door of the sepulchre, Titus, the man of the spear, steps forward eagerly and asks, "Little Miss, what makes you believe He will come out of that tomb alive?"

"Why, if He could call me back from the dead, surely He can come back Himself, Mr. Soldier!"

Brutus turns to one of the boys and questions him, "And who are you, and why are you here?"

"Oh," replies the boy, "I live out in the country at the foot of the mountain where Jesus and three of His disciples once went to rest or worship. One of my father's herders saw them on the mountain and he slipped up through the shrubs till he was close; and, he said, a cloud that seemed brighter than any sunshine seemed to be around all four of them and the three disciples were on their knees with their heads bowed down to the ground, but Jesus' face was turned upward and just above Him were two bright men in white who were talking with Him, and as he looked at them Jesus' face became bright like the sun at noonday, so bright that he had to look away, and he heard a voice right out of the sky say, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.' And then the herder said that when he looked back the bright cloud was gone and only Jesus and the three disciples were left, and one of the disciples, a man named Peter, wanted to get some tents and live there on the top of the mountain, but Jesus said, 'No, our work is down yonder in the valley where the

people are.' And when they came down my father ran after Jesus and begged Him to come to our house and see if He could cure me. I had awful fits and would fall in the fire or in the water and once I was badly burned, and another time I fell in a deep hole of water and was nearly drowned. I had been that way since I was a little baby, and was getting worse. Father took me to some of Jesus' disciples and they could not help me, but Jesus cured me and I have been well ever since. So father let me come with the other children to get flowers to bring for Him to see when He rises from the dead."

"And do you also believe He is going to rise from the dead?" asks Brutus.

"Why, of course I do," answered the boy. "Surely if He could make me well when I was as bad as that, He will be able to do what He wishes with His own body." And he steps forward and lays his flowers beside those brought by Jairus's daughter.

"And who are you, my boy, and why are you here?" inquires Brutus with a voice strangely softened since I first heard it. At this, a tall slender lad whom I have not noticed before steps out into the light with a bigger

armful of flowers than any of the other children and replies, "Oh, sir, I am a stranger here. My father was possessed by demons, he was like a wild man. He would not wear any clothes, and he lived in caves like a wild beast, and he would not come home, and mother and we children had a very hard time, and we felt so sorry about it, for father was kind and good before he went wild. Well, he met Jesus up at the coast when He and His disciples landed there, and Jesus cast out the evil spirits and told my father to go home and take care of his family and tell us and all the neighbors what had happened. And father came home. At first we were afraid of him, but when he told us about Jesus and how He had sent the devils that were in him into a great drove of hogs that rushed into the sea and were drowned, and we saw that he was so changed, mother threw her arms around his neck and wept on his breast, and we children gathered about his knees and we all wept happy tears together, and there never was a kinder man than he has been ever since. So when we heard that Jesus was in trouble in Jerusalem, we all came right up here to see if we could do anything for Him, for

father says we owe everything to Him. And this morning I went out on the hills to gather wild flowers to bring to His grave and these children came, and when I found out they were doing the same thing I asked to come with them here." As he ceases speaking he steps forward and lays his great armful of the sweet spring blossoms on the growing heap of fragrant flowers.

A cry now comes from the gate. "Come quickly, children, it is nearly time to go home!" And Jairus's little daughter turns her head and shouts, "Yes, father dear, in a few moments. Wait until we put the wreath on top of the heap of flowers and say our prayer to Jesus!"

"All right, my child, but come as soon as you can."

"Who are those people at the gate," asks Brutus.

"Our fathers and mothers who came with us, but stayed outside the gate for fear you would not be pleased to have them come in." And now turning she says, "Bring all the flowers," and as the group presses forward I hear one boy say, "Oh, Jesus, bless these flowers as you did the loaves and fishes, and

may they fill the world with their fragrance!" As I gaze on his eager face I say to myself, "That must be the little peddler boy who had the five loaves and the two fishes with which Jesus fed the five thousand in the desert place." When the flowers are heaped at the door until it is almost covered with them, Jairus's daughter shapes the heap daintily to make it as pretty as she can and then turns about to two tiny little girls—oh, but they are pretty! with their innocent shining faces, and curling ringlets about their little necks!—and they are carrying a wreath which the older children have woven of their most beautiful flowers. As Brutus sees that wreath he breaks down, strong hard man that he is, and sobs, "Oh, Jesus, I wish it had been a crown like that, that I plaited for Thee! What a different memory I would have carried through-out all the days to come!"

Now Jairus's daughter places the wreath on the fragrant heap of flowers, and as she turns, Brutus sobs and asks, "Miss, who are these little ones who brought the wreath?"

"Oh, sir, they are two little girls whom Jesus put his hands upon and blessed and said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto

me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' ”

Now as she turns to the children she says, “Come, let us say our prayer together!” As they all crowd forward and kneel in a half circle about the front of the tomb I know that they decided before they came what they would do, and my heart grows very warm and tender and the big tears swell in my eyes and silently roll down my cheeks as I watch their dear childish faces wistful in the flickering firelight. Led by Jairus’s daughter, I hear that little prayer: “Oh, Jesus, we love you, and we believe in you, and we know you will rise from the dead as you said you would. We give you these sweet flowers because you love them so and we love you so. Oh, Jesus, bless these good soldiers who have been so kind to us and forgive them and make them happy. Amen.”

Again a call comes from the gate and the children join hands to run away together. “Good bye, kind soldiers,” cries Jairus’s daughter, and then she shouts in the direction of the gate, “Yes, father dear, we are coming!” And the little group is lost in the darkness.

I can discern their forms no longer and I turn my eyes back toward the group of soldiers about the fire, and there they sit in silence. Every eye is wet. I see that the man who won the Saviour's coat is brushing his eyes on its sleeve.

Now all but Brutus, who offers to keep watch, lie down quietly to rest. Perhaps I, too, fall asleep, for suddenly I am aroused to consciousness by the rocking of the ground beneath my feet and a great light dazzles me; but as my eyes grow steady I see the mighty angel of God roll the stone away from the mouth of the tomb and sit down upon it. His face is so dazzling I cannot gaze on it. And now I hear the glad promise of good cheer to the wondering Marys: "Fear not * * * Ye seek Jesus * * * He is not here, he is risen!"

Mary
Magdalene's
Own
Story

XVIII

Mary Magdalene's Own Story



MARY of Magdala has long suffered in her reputation as a woman under a cloud. While the best scholars for a long time have recognized the fact that there is not the slightest evidence to connect her with the sinful woman of the street who brought her alabaster box to anoint Jesus at the dinner given Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee, the old idea, clung to by the early Christian artists because it added interest to their pictures, is hard to dispel. In spite of the fact that it has no evidence to sustain it, and is repudiated by reputable scholarship, to my amazement I find it accepted as a settled fact of history by so recent and brilliant a writer as Giovanni Papini; so I suppose that hoary, scandalous libel on that joyous woman who ministered so faithfully to Christ will be given a new lease of life.

The more I reflected on the matter the more appropriate it seemed to me to ask Mary Magdalene to tell the story of the tragic death, the burial, and the glorious resurrection of Jesus. So in the quiet stillness of my study we met, and my imagination clothed her with a most engaging personality as I stated to her my desire. "Mary," I said with deep and reverent respect, "I have long felt that of all those who were close to our Lord in those last great events of His earthly career there is no one whose memory would be so interesting and so helpful as yours."

"It is comforting," replied Mary, with a flushed face, "to have you say that, for I have been so cruelly misunderstood and so flagrantly slandered through all the centuries just because dear Doctor Luke happened to write about me in an adjoining chapter to his story of a poor woman of ill repute who also had received the forgiving mercy of Jesus. My home was in the old and prosperous town of Magdala, celebrated for its great wealth, and, alas, for its immorality also. I came of a family of wealth and good social position in my girlhood, but I suffered for many years from an evil domination more terrible than

insanity, an affliction not uncommon in those sad days before Jesus came preaching and healing.

“Through the kindness of a neighbor woman who had been healed of a painful illness by a word from the lips of Jesus, I was brought to His presence and He commanded the seven demons that had tormented me for years to come out of me, and I entered into a life so sweet and beautiful that it surpassed all my girlhood dreams. My parents died while I was yet suffering from what seemed a hopeless affliction. My father had left me an independent income, far more than I needed for my own simple wants, and I had the joy of being able to minister to the needs of our Lord and His disciples for more than two years of His gracious work of healing and blessed ministration of mercy. My gratitude and love for Jesus and the joy of ministering to His needs brought me into the most delightful association with Mary, the mother of our Lord, Joanna, Salome, Susanna, and a number of other choice women who like myself were devoted friends of Christ.”

“Mary,” said I, “I wish you would tell me the story, as you remember the incidents, of

the trial and crucifixion of our Lord. How did you first learn of the arrest of Jesus?"

"I had eaten the Passover feast with Mary, the mother of John Mark," she replied, "in the same house where the Lord and His disciples partook of the Last Supper. After the arrest of Jesus, when they came so near taking Mark with them and he escaped only by slipping out of his night sheet and leaving it in the soldier's hand, he came home and aroused his mother and told her what had occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane and she came and awoke me and we were in great fear and suspense.

"When we learned that the priests were going to take Jesus before Pilate to ask for His death, I went at once to Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. She was one of our number and a great friend of mine, and she said, 'We will go and see Claudia, Pilate's wife. She told me only the other day that she believed on Him and would be as openly His disciple as I am if she dared, but it would be sure to get Pilate into trouble. There never was a more devoted wife than Claudia. But we must see her now, because no one has so much influence with Pilate as Claudia. The

only good thing I know about Pilate is his love for Claudia; he actually refused to accept the governorship until Cæsar gave him permission to bring her to Jerusalem with him, which is against the usual regulations. If any one can do anything to influence Pilate to be merciful to Jesus, it will be Claudia.' So we hurried to Pilate's home and saw his wife. We found her already very much excited and anxious. She said that she had had a strange dream during the night. It came to her over and over again like a nightmare. It seemed that something awful was going to happen to the Lord and that it would mean great harm to her husband.

" 'Have you told Pilate about it?' inquired Joanna.

" 'No. I have not had a chance.'

" 'But the trial is now going on, Claudia. Why not call a messenger and send your husband a note?'

" 'Claudia hesitated a moment, saying, 'I hate to do that when he is trying a case; but this is so important and I feel so deeply that it is a very serious matter, that I am going to risk doing it.' And that was the way the news

of Claudia's dream, of which Matthew tells, came to Pilate's attention.

"Poor Pilate, he tried to do what Claudia asked, but the priests stirred the mob to shout for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

"When Joanna and I got to the pretorium, the people were just coming out, and Jesus was being led away by the soldiers. His hands were bound and the crown of thorns was still on His head. His back was bloody from the scourging. It broke our hearts; but tho the tears would come and we were wild with anguish, we tried to keep up, hoping that some chance might come for us to do something for Him. At first He carried His own cross, but His strength gave way, and finally He sank with a groan and we thought He had fainted. Then the captain of the soldiers seized Simon, a big, strong man from Cyrene, who had been following close to Jesus, and put the cross on him. He came to be a great Christian afterward, and his wife and two sons, Rufus and Alexander, were all faithful Christians. One thing comforted us not a little, and that was that altho Jesus was so weak in His body He could not carry His

cross, yet He was very brave, and sometimes a great gladness shone in His face.

“When we arrived at the place where they crucified Him between the two robbers, and they began to drive the nails through His hands, I could not stand it, and hid my face and cried until it was over and they were all three lifted up into place. Oh, the agony of that day! None of the disciples came near the cross all day, except John. But all the women of the group of Christ’s special friends were there. At first there was a great deal of noise and the rude men mocked Him and taunted Him, and He never answered them. But when one of the robbers begged Him to remember him when He came to His kingdom, He promised the robber that that very day he should be with Him in Paradise.

“It was such a sweet moment, and so like Jesus, when He gave His mother into John’s care. I was standing close to Mary of Nazareth and John stood near by on the other side. I saw the tenderness on His dear face as He looked on His mother and said, ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ Then His eyes turned toward John, and He said, ‘Behold thy mother!’ But the most wonderful moment of all that day to

me was when they were mocking and taunting Him and abusing Him the worst, and He began to speak. In the hush that came we heard Him say—oh, so tenderly that His voice seemed full of unshed tears—‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!’ That stilled even that wild mob for a moment. At last Jesus cried with a loud voice that startled us all, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!’ and He was gone.

“We women waited weeping until Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus came. I stood near Nicodemus as he gazed up into the bloody face of Jesus. The tears ran down his face like rain as he sobbed, ‘O Master, I would give everything I have if I could go back and follow Thee openly from that time when I first came to Thee by night.’

“Nicodemus brought a large amount of myrrh and aloes and spices, and Joseph brought fine linen to wrap about the wounded body of Jesus, and we went with them and saw the burial in Joseph’s tomb.”

“Mary,” I asked, unable to wait longer, “did you have any hope that Friday night that Jesus would rise again?”

“I have often asked myself that same ques-



Schmid. 1835—

WOMAN! WHY WEEPEST THOU?

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. *John XX, 15, 16.*

tion," she answered. "I must have had some hope. He had told us He would rise after three days. I know now that I was in a daze of wonder and suspense every waking moment, altho I went on planning for the care of His body, not daring to admit to my own heart the hope that He would rise.

"On Saturday night, or Sabbath night, four of us, Mary the mother of James, Salome the mother of John, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and I met at the house of Salome to plan to go very early, before day, and take spices to put about the body of Him who was so dear to us. We did not tell any one else we were going to do it. It was not yet day when we came into Joseph's garden. As we drew near, all at once I remembered the big stone at the door and said, 'How will we ever get that big stone away? We can never roll it away ourselves?' It troubled us; but, hoping to get some one to help us, we hurried on with our arms full of packages of the fragrant spices, and when we came in sight of the tomb the dawn was coming on and I saw that the stone was rolled back and the tomb was open, and I cried out, 'The stone is rolled away!' Then in great excitement we all ran to it and

there we saw the two angels and drew back afraid, but one of them spoke to us in the most cheerful voice: 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. See where they laid Him. Go tell His disciples and Peter. He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.'

"We ran out of the garden full of mingled fear and gladness. At the gate I said to the other women, 'You go on and tell the others. I think Peter will be with John, and Mary the mother of Jesus will be there. I will go there.' I hurried as fast as I could and rushed into the house. It was now broad daylight and the sun was shining. Peter and John were already up, and I shouted, 'John, Peter, a wonderful thing has happened! The Lord has risen from the dead as He told us He would! The tomb is empty! We saw two angels there and they told us to tell the disciples and Peter.' 'What's that?' exclaimed Peter, leaping to his feet. 'Mary, did the angels say "and Peter?" Did he mention me by name?' I felt hurt that Peter should doubt me at a time like that, and I said, 'Why, Peter, you know I never told you a lie in my life! Those were the very words of the angel.' Then John and

Peter rushed out of the house, Peter saying, 'We must go and see!' I followed after, but I was so breathless from my long run to tell them the good news that I had to walk, and they were soon out of my sight. So when I came again to the tomb Peter and John had already gone away. The angels were gone also, and there was nothing left but the empty tomb. Suddenly there fell upon me an awful feeling of loneliness and depression. The sight of the angels and their words of assurance that Jesus was risen had so lifted my heart into ecstasies of joy, and the excitement of carrying the good news to Peter and John had so occupied my mind, that I had taken the resurrection as a happy certainty until then. But now, alone with the empty tomb, my heart sank within me, my faith and hope seemed to vanish away. It seemed that all must have been only a happy dream. I burst into tears. I gathered up the packages of spices we had dropped on the ground when the angels sent us on our mission to the disciples, and then I looked down into the tomb and I saw the angels were still there, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot where the Lord had lain. I could not see them very

clearly for the tears that were rolling down my cheeks, and one of them said, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' I answered through my sobs: 'Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have placed Him.' Then I turned away, and there stood Jesus! I did not at first know it was He. I was weeping so much that I did not lift my eyes to His face as He asked in a voice I did not at first recognize, 'Woman, why do you weep? What do you seek?' Naturally I thought it was the caretaker in charge of the Garden, and I answered, 'Sir, if you have removed Him from here, tell me where you have placed Him, and I will take Him away.' Then Jesus spoke to me in the old familiar voice I loved so well, saying, 'Mary!' and I looked up into His dear face and cried, 'Master!' In my joy I would have embraced His feet, for I fell on my knees before Him, but He gently put out a restraining hand and said, 'Touch me not, because I have not as yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers, however, and tell them, I go up to My Father and your Father; and My God and your God!' And when I came again to where the disciples were, all my tears were gone. My

heart was full of joy beyond words and my face was so happy and radiant that they all sprang to their feet in astonishment and said, 'Why, Mary, what is it? What has happened to you?' All I could say at first was, 'I have seen the Lord!' "

Christ's
Easter
Appearance
to Peter

XIX

Christ's Easter Appearance to Peter



AFTER the conversation in which Peter talked so frankly and so helpfully about the circumstances which led up to his sad denial of Jesus, I blamed myself greatly that I had let him go away without clearing up another point which had long puzzled me. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says:

“I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep.”

According to this statement of the great apostle to the Gentiles, some time between the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene on Easter morning and to the two who met Him on the way to Emmaus probably, but surely before He appeared to the group of disciples at night, He appeared unto Peter alone, and of that appearance Paul is the only one who ever wrote anything about it, except Luke's hint in telling of the conversation on the way to Emmaus.

The more I thought of it the more deeply I felt that I must talk with Peter again face to face and ask him to break his long silence and tell me of that first meeting with the Lord after he disappeared in such bitter grief following his denial of Christ in the courtyard of the palace of Caiaphas.

I endured my curiosity as long as I could, and then I summoned Simon Peter. "Peter," I said, "it would greatly comfort my heart, and I am sure it would comfort many others, if you would tell me the story of the appearance of Jesus to you on that first Easter day."

Peter had a far-away, dreamy look in his deep blue eyes for a moment, and then a light flamed up in his face as he spoke:

“That was the sunrise in my life. When I rushed out into the black darkness just before the dawn on that awful morning, I had no hope for time or eternity; my sin loomed up before me as greater than the sin of Judas. I said to myself, ‘I am worse than Judas. Judas was always narrow and mean in his little soul. He had no such chance as I. Jesus made me one of His three closest friends. He poured out His love and tenderness on me in a constant stream, and now I have wickedly denied Him in the hour of His deepest danger and trial.’

“No one save Christ and our heavenly Father will ever know how I suffered that awful day. I dared not go near the Cross, and yet my greatest longing was to beg His forgiveness before His dear eyes should close in death. At night I sought out John. Dear old John! I knew that no matter what I had done, John would do what he could to comfort me, and he did. And so the time passed in almost sleepless shame and sorrow until Easter morning, when Mary Magdalene came in great excitement telling us that the Lord had risen from the dead, that the grave was empty, and that, in company with the other

women, she had seen an angel who told them to tell the disciples *and Peter*. When she said 'and Peter,' I jumped up and shouted, 'Mary, did the angel say that? Did he really mention me?' 'Yes, he did, Peter!' 'Are you sure, Mary? You must not deceive me and give me false hope!' 'Why, Peter,' Mary said in astonishment, 'You know I never lied to you in my life! That is just the way the angel said it—his very words were, "Go tell his disciples and Peter."' The other women have gone to tell the others and I came here because I hoped you would be here with John.'

"Can you imagine what that meant to me? A bright ray of sunshine entered the black night of my heart. There was hope. Then came the fear, 'Have Mary and the other women been deceived?' There was not a moment to waste. I must know. John was equally excited; and we three started together for the tomb. Mary had run herself out on the way to us and soon dropped behind. I led at the start, but John soon passed me and beat me to the tomb by quite a distance. But there his timidity overcame him and he stayed outside peering in. When I got there



Hofmann. 1824-1902

CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE

And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. *Mark XIV, 36.*

I went in to examine and found the napkin that had bound Jesus' head and the grave clothes folded and laid aside carefully. I was convinced that our Master was alive.

"As John and I walked back thoughtfully, the awful remorse on account of the wicked sin of my denial of the Lord came upon me blacker than ever. 'What avail is it to me,' I thought, 'if my Lord does live, since I have so shamefully denied Him?' I could not go in the house, and I told John I was so nervous and restless that I must stay in the open air. Suddenly I had a great longing to go back to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane, to see again the spot where Christ had knelt that awful night of agony and prayed to God. So there I wended my way—past where we met the soldiers, where Judas kissed Him and where I had wounded Malchus, and on to the spot where John and James and I had sat on the ground. There a flush of shame came back at my memory of how, when the Master came back, He asked, 'Could you not watch with me one hour?' Then I went on to where the Master had knelt and where in His agony He had fallen forward on His face and cried to God for com-

fort. I fell on my own knees on that holy spot and cried aloud; 'O Master! Dear Teacher! If I could only see your kind face once more and tell you how bitterly I repent of my sin!' I dropped forward with my face in my hands as I said it, and in response I heard the blessed voice of Jesus at my side, saying, 'I know, Peter. And because I know your sorrow, your sin is all forgiven. You will be a faithful minister in the days to come. I trust you now more than ever.' I leaped to my feet. It was Jesus! my Lord! The scars of the thorns were on His brow. The ragged prints of the nails were in His hands. I would have gathered Him in my arms. But with a tender smile He waved me back, 'I am not yet ascended to the Father,' He said. 'Peace be with you. Be comforted. I will see you yet again.' And He was gone.

"My heart was glad. My remorse was gone. A deep peace filled my soul. I went back to tell John with a joy beyond words."

Simon
the Zealot
Tells the
Story of
Judas

XX

Simon the Zealot Tells the Story of Judas



IHAVE long felt that of all the men who knew Judas Iscariot, the one who could really let the sunlight of truth in upon that dark and mysterious career was the other Simon among the apostles, he who is sometimes called Simon the Zealot.

Strange as it may seem, if one reads about and broods over and dreams around any character of the olden time for a long while, that particular personality will become very real, as real as the men and women who live on one's street or with whom one does business, or those whom one meets in social intercourse every day.

So it was that after Simon the Zealot had long since been one of my familiars, I summoned courage to ask him one day about Judas. It was in my study, where Simon and I had often met before, and that bushy-bearded old revolutionist was now sitting across my study-table from me. He sat up,

suddenly alert, and ran his fingers through his grizzled beard. His sharp black eyes seemed boring to my very marrow as he asked, not without a tone of suspicion in his voice, "Why do you ask me about Judas?"

"Because," I answered, "for a long time it has seemed probable to me that there was some close fellowship between you and that mysterious and ill-starred man, and that, if you would, you could explain much that has seemed inexplicable about Judas."

The saddest look I ever saw came over that storm-beaten face as he replied, "You are right. I am the only one, save the great Master, who knows the full story of Judas. I have kept it to myself all along, and it is hard to break the silence of the years; but, as you say, it is within my power to explain, in some degree at least, the seemingly inconsistent career of the most utterly despised character in all history.

"One reason, perhaps the controlling reason, for my long silence is that I can not tell the story of Judas without telling my own—Judas was my own son."

After making this astounding statement, a statement for which I was partially prepared

through close study of the probabilities of the case, Simon hid his face in his hands for a long time, as if in grief over the sad memories of the past. Finally he aroused himself from his reverie, and throwing back his head and brushing the thin gray curls from his sharp, keen eyes, in which still lingered some of the old excitable ardor of youth, he exclaimed:

"You can not understand Judas unless you know about his father and his childhood and youth, for the poor boy never knew a mother's care. His mother died when he was but a baby, and he had little care and control save what a man could give.

"I was a born revolutionist. From my boyhood I was always fighting against the existing conditions. I suppose if I had lived in these present times and had known the tyranny of the Russian Czars I would have been a Nihilist or a Bolshevik. I hated the Roman yoke and was ever ready to risk life to throw it off.

"Twenty-four years before the birth of Judas I was one of the followers of Judas of Galilee, sometimes called Judas of Gamala, and tho his career ended in failure, I loved him so dearly that I named my baby boy for

him. As the boy grew I saw that he had inherited my spirit of restless adventure, but with the difference that he was determined to turn it to account for his own comfort. I had always been reckless of any personal gain, if I could only throw off the hateful Roman yoke. But Judas had suffered so much as a boy from poverty and hard conditions that he often said, 'Father, if ever I get my chance I am going to strike as hard as you at the Roman, but I am going to look out for myself better than you have and lay something by for a rainy day. There is no use letting the leaders get away with all the plunder.'

"There was some excuse for the boy feeling that way," mused Simon, as tho talking to himself rather than to me. "We would get ahead a little; I would gather some property, and then I would go away on some revolutionary expedition and lose everything. So we lived from hand to mouth, until Judas was made to feel that the lack of money was a hard and cruel experience."

"How did you get acquainted with Jesus?" I asked, after a moment's silence.

"It was through John the Baptist. Judas was twenty-four years old and a very bright

young man. I had done all I could to give him a good education, and he was considered one of the clearest-headed young fellows in the country. The news of John the Baptist's preaching aroused our interest and we went together to hear him, and both of us felt the fascination of his powerful personality. We remained with him for some days and were in the crowd when Jesus came to be baptized, and immediately became captivated by Him. We hoped that at last there had arisen the great leader who would be able to break the cruel grasp of Rome. For a long time Jesus did not seem to pay much attention to us. I was the only one of the group of men who took a special interest in His early ministry who had had any experiences in revolutionary movements, and that gave me hope that I might be the leading General under this new King. So it was very humiliating to me to see ignorant fishermen like Peter and his partner John given so much attention. It seemed as tho knowledge and experience was to count for nothing. Judas, too, could not understand why his keen intelligence as a young man of business ability should not be received with more attention and appreciation

than was shown to fishermen. But we held on, for we felt there was something great and unusual about Jesus.

“Neither of us are to be blamed for not understanding the spiritual kingdom of Jesus. Not one of the group knew any more than we did about that. We were all ambitious for personal gain and position in what we supposed was an attempt to throw off the Roman yoke and set up Jesus as a king. Judas and I had been so left in the background that both of us were astonished when Jesus came to select the twelve and He decided to bring us into the group. We were the last in the list, which humiliated us not a little. We got in, as it were, only by the skin of our teeth.

“But we were glad to be in the special group and talked it over and determined to make the best of it. Judas from the start had his eye on the treasurership of the movement. The only one we feared as a rival for him was Matthew who had been formerly known as Levi. He had been a tax gatherer for the Roman Government, so we were all disgusted when Jesus accepted him as one of the twelve. He had the training in business that would naturally have pointed to him as a proper

man for treasurer, but I managed to raise the question of the propriety of a cousin of Jesus having that office. I caused so much talk about it that Matthew became sensitive on the subject and was not willing to accept it. So I brought about the selection of Judas, whose education and ability really fitted him for the place.

“In many ways Judas was a good treasurer. He was keen at a bargain. It was impossible to cheat him in a trade. He was a hard worker—not a lazy bone in him; and he studied to buy to advantage. Of course, there is no denying the fact that he was ambitious. We all were. Not one in the group was more ambitious than John. Why, the very last week of the earthly life of the Master, John put up Salome, his mother, as ambitious a woman as there was in all Judea, to persuade Jesus to promise to give her sons, John and James, the highest places in the new kingdom which we all hoped He was about to set up. So, surely, Judas is not to be blamed for being ambitious.

“The besetting sin of Judas was his selfishness and greed for money, some of the reasons for which I have explained. I knew when I

helped to get him selected as treasurer that he intended to save up money for himself. But I thought that if he would do so only where his alertness and ability saved money for the cause, that he had a right to a fair commission for his efforts. God knows I never dreamed of the awful tragedy to which it would lead!"

"Did you know that Judas was pilfering from the treasury the money contributed by Joanna and Mary Magdalene and other friends of Jesus?" I asked.

"I did not for a long time. It was near the end before any one suspected it. Indeed, I do not think he did anything of the kind at first. The amount on hand at any time was pitifully small, and Judas hoped that if the revolution was successful, his faithful service would be requited by the management of the finances of the kingdom. But when we began to lose hope of the success of the movement, and Jesus refused to allow Himself to be proclaimed king, Judas thought he might as well save something out of the wreck. John soon discovered this and charged Judas with theft, but they did not all believe it.

"The night at Simon's house in Bethany, when Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus,



Armitage. 1817-1896

THE REMORSE OF JUDAS

Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. *Matt. XXVII, 3-5.*

used the costly ointment to anoint the head and feet of Jesus, Judas was not the only one who thought it a shame to waste so much money when we were all so poor and when there were so many calls for us to help people who were poorer than we, tho, of course, I know now that Judas was specially angry because he felt the whole movement was about to end in disaster and he would be thrown out of his job almost a pauper.

“When Jesus defended Mary, Judas took it as a personal rebuke and as the certain precursor of the failure of all his plans. In his anger and discouragement he rushed away to the priests, as you know, and plotted with them to make a little for himself by betraying Christ into their hands.

“The rest you know, of course, from the accounts given by the others and published in the New Testament. The last time I ever saw my unhappy son was just before the dawn on that night of Christ’s arrest. Judas had done his horrible deed and kissed the Master into the hands of His foes and, seemingly at Christ’s desire, we had all fled in the Mount of Olives. But I was anxious and curious, and so I followed as near as I dared in order to see what

the end would be. As I stood in the shadows watching not far from the entrance to the place where Jesus was being examined before Caiaphas, I saw Judas come up to the door and hide himself in the shadow of the building; and when Christ was brought forth to go before Pilate, I saw him rush up to some priests. It was those with whom he had bargained for the Master's betrayal. The light fell on his face and I saw how haggard and wretched he looked, and I shuddered at the change that had come over him. There was such a look of hopeless anguish as I have never seen on any other human face, and I heard him shriek: 'I have sinned! I have betrayed innocent blood!' Then the priests turned on him cold faces in which there was mingled scorn and contempt, and said harshly, 'What is that to us? See thou to that!' and they walked coldly away. Judas in desperation flung a handful of silver pieces on the floor and, before I could reach him, dashed frantically away and in a moment was lost in the darkness. At the sound of the money the priests stopped, then turned back and carefully searched until all of that terrible bribe for which my son betrayed his Lord was found.

"I never saw Judas again. He hanged himself that morning and I can only leave him in the hands of his God.

"It was the end of my own career as well as that of Judas. You have observed, of course, that my name is never again referred to by any of the biographers of Jesus. I was under such suspicion, on account of the tragic fate of my son and his shameful deed, that I was made to feel that my association publicly with the early church would do more harm than good. I remained quietly in the background for the rest of my life. But I, who had been as ambitious as any, but always loyal to my country, came to know my risen Lord in the forgiveness of my sins and the glorious assurance of immortality."

How
Doctor Luke
Found His
Story
of the
Prodigal
Son

XXI

How Doctor Luke Found His Story of the Prodigal Son



DOCTOR Luke met his friend Lazarus one day on the street in Jerusalem and asked how they all were at the home in Bethany. "Oh, we are all about as usual," replied Lazarus. "Mary goes about dreaming with a far-away look in her eyes, and Martha sputters over her cooking. She was after me this morning about men having so much easier times than women."

"How did she come to get after you this morning, Lazarus?" asked Luke, scenting a story.

"It came up through some reference to a story the Master once told Mary about a father and his two sons, and Martha, being in one of her touchy moods, said, 'Yes, Lazarus, you may thank your lucky stars that you were born a son and not a daughter. It is the sons who get all the freedom, and the daughters

who get to stay at home and take care of the house.' ”

“But what about that story the Master told Mary of the father and his two sons? That is one I have never heard. You know, Lazarus, I am trying to get together in their regular order as near as possible all the important deeds and sayings of Jesus.”

“Yes, I know,” said Lazarus, “but you had better see Martha and Mary about it, for they are a good deal better at remembering things of that kind than I am; besides, Martha has been saying, ‘I guess Doctor Luke thinks Joanna’s cooking is finer than mine; he has been going there to dinner a lot since he has been here.’ ”

“That will never do,” replied Luke. “Joanna has been helping me much in gathering material for my ‘Life of Jesus’; but I must go and see Martha if that is the way she feels.”

Luke hurried out to Bethany, and Martha met him at the door, chiding, “Well, Doctor Luke, I think it is about time you were coming to see us! Do you know how long it has been since you were here? What have you been doing with yourself?”

"Why, Martha, you know I have to look after my patients. And all my spare time I have been giving to gathering up the facts about the deeds and teachings of our dear Lord."

Martha's face clouded with sadness as she said with a sigh, "Ah, me! it just breaks my heart to think that I can never see His dear face in this room again, nor cook dinner for Him, nor have Him rest here from His labors! Oh, Luke, the dearest thing in my life was to know Jesus and feel that I was able to care for Him a little, and make His hard life a little easier." And Martha wiped the tears from her eyes on the corner of her kitchen apron, which she had not removed, for Luke was such an old friend that he was like home folks.

"Oh, Martha," said Luke, recalling the real purpose of his call, "Lazarus spoke something to me about a story Jesus told in this house one time when He visited here, concerning a father and his two sons. It was a new story to me, and I wish you would tell me all you remember of it."

Martha laughed aloud and said, "I guess Lazarus has been gossiping to you. Did he

tell you how I was giving the men a scolding for having all the good things?"

"Yes, he said you thought it was a good deal finer thing to be born a boy than a girl."

"Well, Doctor, I don't take any of that back, either."

"But, Martha, please tell me about this story that started your lecture to Lazarus."

"You will have to see Mary about that story. You see, Jesus was here and I was going to have company in the evening, and my hands were that full with it all that I did not know which way to turn; and there sat that moon-eyed, dreaming sister of mine at the feet of Jesus, doing nothing but listen to Him, and it vexed me. I finally went right out where they were and asked Jesus if He did not think Mary had better come and help me get dinner. Jesus looked at me in that heavenly way of His that always drove all the vexation out of my heart, and said, 'Oh, don't worry so, Martha. You care too much about entertaining people. Let Mary learn the things which will never cease to bless her.' So I went back to my work quieted, and when Mary came after a while to work with me she said Jesus had told her the sweetest story she

ever heard about a dear old father who lived on a great plantation with his two sons, and the younger one got restless and took his share of the property and went off and lost it all, while the other stayed at home and worked on the farm. After a while the younger boy came back on foot and penniless and the father took him in and made a big feast for him and forgave him.

“I remember I was still a little vexed because Mary had not helped, and I sputtered, ‘Well, Mary, my sympathy is with the boy who stayed at home and milked cows while the other young Lazybones went off flirting and carousing with bad women.’ But Mary looked shocked and said gently, ‘Martha, I am sorry you had to do my work, too, but oh, it was a wonderful story. I can never forget it. And you would not say what you do about the father forgiving the younger son if you had heard Jesus tell the story.’ So you will have to see Mary about that story. Here she comes to speak for herself.”

After Luke had greeted the smiling-eyed Mary, he said, “Martha and I have been talking about a story Jesus told you concerning a father and his two sons.”

Martha arose, laughing, and said, "Well, Doctor, you just must stay to dinner now, since we have you here after such a long time, and I will get it on while Mary tells the story. She likes that kind of work a good deal better than she does fussing with pots and kettles. But I guess you dear men would all have indigestion if there were not some Marthas to cook for you." With that parting shot the big-souled woman went to the kitchen with a happy heart to plan her dinner for Doctor Luke.

As soon as she had gone, Mary exclaimed with an animated face, "Oh, Doctor Luke, I wish you could have heard Jesus tell the wonderful story about that wandering boy and his return home again. It has been such a comfort to me!"

"How did He come to tell it to you?" inquired Luke.

"Oh, I had been saying how hard it was for me to realize God. I could not picture God to myself. It was all so vague and unreal. And Jesus said, 'Mary, have you not read where the psalmist says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him"?' And when I still said it did



Dubuffe. 1820-1883

THE PRODIGAL SON

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all.....he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.....And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. *Luke XV, 13-20.*

not seem real to me, Jesus said, 'Mary, let me tell you a little story which I was telling last night to the Scribes and Pharisees. I hope it will show you how kind and tender God's heart is toward you, even tho you have done wrong.' Then He told me that story, and ever since then I have been able to love God the Father just as tenderly as I loved Jesus Himself."

"Mary," said Luke, "won't you please tell me that story slowly and as nearly as possible in the very words Jesus used in telling it to you, so that I may put it in my 'Life of Jesus' for which I am gathering material now?"

At that Mary exclaimed, "Oh, Doctor Luke, I am so glad! That very day, for fear I might forget some part of that story which I liked so much, I carefully wrote down every word of it while it was fresh in my memory—just as the Lord told it. I will get that for you, and you may copy it."

So Luke copied the story of the Prodigal Son as we have it in his Gospel, his eyes glowing with wonderful joy and enthusiasm; and when he had finished he cried, "My, how rejoiced Paul will be when he reads this story!

I have not found anything that the Master said that will make Paul so happy as this."

"Dinner is ready!" shouted Martha, standing with flushed face in the kitchen door. "Come, Doctor Luke, a little roast lamb won't hurt your story."

"No, indeed," answered Luke; "and there is no one knows how to roast it so well as my friend Martha."

Afterwards, when Luke showed his rich find to Paul, that great-souled lover of Jesus said, "Luke, this is the greatest day's gleanings you have ever done. You have found the heart of the Gospel. This story will live forever. It is the revelation of the heart of God. Men and women will bless you for this to the end of time."

Luke smiled his deep gratitude and content. He was not much of a talker, but he was a good doctor and a great lover of Jesus.

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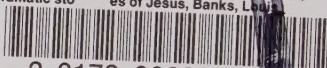
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